

Hitler's Third Reich – Issue 22

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HITLER'S

Third Reich

Volume
22
Monthly

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HITLER'S Third Reich

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In 1919 Hitler was employed by the army to spy on the right-wing German Workers Party. He found himself in like-minded company, and proved himself to be a speaker of genius. He took over the party as a vehicle to propel him from obscurity to political prominence.



A FÜHRER

Above: Hitler's first appearance as a public speaker was on 16 October 1919 at the Hofbräukeller in Munich. He would long remember his instant success. In Mein Kampf he wrote of his self-discovery: "What before I had simply felt within me, without in any way knowing it, was now proved by reality: I could speak!" Public success before a non-captive audience was to prove intoxicating.

Main picture: Adolf Hitler in 1922 aged 23. By this stage the Nazi party was Adolf Hitler, and could not survive without him.

IS BORN

NSDAP: 1920 – 1923



AVENGE THE DIKTAT!



Above: British Prime Minister David Lloyd George and other western leaders assemble in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles. The treaty they signed in 1919 was draconian, but Germany had no choice but to accept it.

Below: The Versailles Treaty dictated that some German soil was to be surrendered entirely, whilst other areas would have to submit to Allied occupation. The Rhineland was occupied by French troops from 1923 to June 1930.

HITLER PREACHED vengeance, not reconciliation. He told all those prepared to listen that responsibility for German defeat did not lie with the field Army.

He pronounced that the German soldier had been 'stabbed in the back' by forces at home. These enemies included the Jew-backed industrialists and the Communists. Hitler also claimed that the German Empire's humiliation at Versailles was further evidence of a world-wide Jewish conspiracy to disempower the Aryan nation. For tens of thousands of demobilised German soldiers returned from the front, Hitler's extremist demagoguery gave them hope.

Top: Social agitation led to open revolt in most German cities in the opening days of November 1918. Revolutionaries hoped to import the ideology which had so recently taken control in Russia, while right-wing extremists opposed them. German politics had begun the descent into extremism from which it would not recover until 1945.



ON 12 SEPTEMBER 1919 HITLER made his first encounter with what was to become the Nazi Party. He came, not as a supporter, but as a spy on behalf of the German army. He was a 'V-man' (informant)

for Captain Karl Mayr of the 'Information Department' that monitored political groups of all complexions. He found a small gathering in Munich's *Sternneckerbräu*. The *völkisch* leader Dietrich Eckart failed to appear, and the members of the *Deutsche Arbeits Partei* (DAP) German Workers' Party listened instead to Gottfried Feder's lecture on 'breaking interest slavery.' Feder was criticised by a Professor Baumann, who launched into a speech of his own, preaching the virtues of Bavarian independence. Hitler forgot himself and denounced Baumann with such vehemence that the Professor fled the room. Party Chairman Anton Drexler watched Hitler's tirade with fascination; once the tirade was over, he pressed into Hitler's hand a copy of his pamphlet 'My Political Awakening.' A week later, Hitler received a postcard telling him he had been accepted as a member. With membership number 555 (not 7 as he would later claim) Adolf Hitler joined the DAP.

POLITICAL AWAKENING

Hitler was in fact ordered to join. Captain Mayr wanted a man inside the party. Despite the membership number allocated to Hitler, it is unlikely the DAP had over 500 paid-up members that autumn. Its meetings were in small pub side-rooms and it relied on hand-written notices to advertise them. Hitler became a full-time propagandist on the party's behalf, but drew his army pay until 31 March 1920. There were over 70 similar *völkisch* groups in Germany; more than a dozen had been spawned in Munich since the end of the war.

Nazi ideology pre-dated Hitler. Each of these groups spouted anti-Semitic, xenophobic propaganda. Some harked back to a mythical 'golden age' of Germany; others dreamed of a German Utopia in which Jews and 'capitalist exploiters' were eliminated. Their social-Darwinianism, belief in eugenics and determination to topple the existing social and political elite was shared by right-wing groups across Europe. When Hitler was a young man in Austria, a German Workers' Party had been founded at Trautenau. It was not the only group to combine anti-Marxism and anti-capitalist socialism with *völkisch* trimmings.

Over the summer of 1919 Munich was the scene of repeated anti-Semitic demonstrations organized by the various *völkisch* groups. It was against this background that Hitler



DEUTSCHLAND ERWACHE

IN MID-1922 Hitler visited the business of Georg Hagl, a Munich flag maker. Hitler had come to discuss plans for a new Nazi standard. It was to be based on a Roman legionary model, and as well as bearing the already prominent swastika was also to carry the legend 'Deutschland Erwache!' (Germany Awaken).

In 1920 Dietrich Eckart, one of the founders of the Nazi movement and a great influence on Hitler in the years leading up to the Putsch, wrote a poem entitled 'Deutschland Erwache.' The poem called for a metaphysical awakening of the German spirit. Eckart expressed a widespread contemporary longing for an end to decadence, for rebirth, for the start of a new historical era implying an abandonment of the Western humanist tradition. Hitler was often a grateful visitor to the wealthy Eckart's home and Eckart persuaded himself that he was playing the tune to which Hitler was dancing. He never lived long enough to discover otherwise.

Nazis loved slogans and leapt upon the chant of *Deutschland Erwache*. But the second and equally popular line of the refrain was 'Juda verrecke' – Destruction to the Jews.

began his career as a platform orator. Hitler heaped scorn on the government in Berlin, the 'November criminals' as he branded them. Indeed, his primary target was the 'establishment' in Germany and the 'traitors' who had made the shameful peace in 1918.

POWER MATTERS

The DAP was re-named the NSDAP (National Socialist German Worker's Party) early in 1920. Hitler described the Party's 25-point programme as 'unalterable,' not as a sign of his iron determination, but to prevent internal policy discussion. From the start of his political career he recognised that only power mattered. Policy could come later.

Hitler eclipsed his little party within little more than a year of joining. By 1921 Hitler and the NSDAP were synonymous. His imposition of the *Führerprinzip* could not be resisted by the original founding members. They knew that without him, they had no Party. When Anton Drexler attempted to amalgamate them with the DSP, a north German *völkisch* group, Hitler resigned, fearful that his dominance would be eroded. His tantrum succeeded: the merger was blocked and he was accepted as the

undisputed leader. However, Hitler's prominence was strictly limited to Bavaria. The NSDAP had little presence outside the former kingdom.

Hitler's ill-judged bid for power in 1923 became so central to later Nazi myth that his role in events is still often overestimated. Hitler was far from being the prime mover in the power-struggle that led to the Munich putsch. There were many who agreed with Professor Baumann's view, that Bavaria should resume her existence as an independent state. It was little more than 50 years since Bavaria had accepted its incorporation within the German Reich. Anti-Prussian feeling ran high in the wake of 1918. Hitler's lambasting of the 'November criminals' was another twist to Bavarian opposition to Berlin.

NOVEMBER CRIMINALS

The Bavarian political establishment had a more immediate enemy in the shape of the Communists. The short-lived *Räterepublik* of 1919 was quashed, but such was the fear of a Red revival that a citizen militia was founded. The *Einwohnerwehr* could put 400,000 men on the streets and in its shadow sheltered a number

of paramilitary groups that made terrorist attacks on left-wing leaders throughout Germany. – there were over 350 assassinations carried out by right-wing extremists between 1919 and 1922. Minister President Ritter von Kahr led a violently counter-revolutionary government in Munich, refusing Berlin's demands to disband the militia until early 1921. When Kahr finally complied, his regime saw to it that the militia did not disappear, but splintered into new voluntary organisations. The Bavarian *Reichswehr* colluded, supplying arms and training to the paramilitaries against the day the Reds staged another revolt. This included the SA, at this time only a few hundred strong and notionally the 'sport section' of the NSDAP.

In August 1921 Reich Finance Minister Matthias Erzberger was assassinated, but Kahr refused to accept the national state of emergency declared by Reich President Ebert. Inflation gathered pace. Hitler and other *völkisch* leaders whipped up the crowds at frequent political meetings. Hitler was jailed for a month after his men beat one man too many, even for the Munich authorities to overlook. He referred to himself as 'the drummer' at this time, preparing the ground



Above: The first four 'Deutschland Erwache' standards were dedicated in a ceremony at the first Nazi Parteitag, which took place Munich's Marsfeld on 28 January 1923. With the authorities turning a blind eye, the meeting was attended by 6,000 uniformed men of the Sturm Abteilung.



Right: Hitler adopted the 'Deutschland Erwache!' slogan for all of his political campaigning through the 1920s and 1930s, culminating in the 1933 election. Here, two stormtroopers pose in front of an early Nazi poster proclaiming the message.



Above: The scene at the Deutscher Tag in Nuremberg on 1-2 September 1923. Here the NSDAP joined with the Bund Oberland and the Reichsflagge to form the Kampfbund, a right-wing alliance aimed at seizing power. But in November 1923 Hitler miscalculated – he overestimated the public support for a coup d'état. From the unsuccessful Putsch onwards Hitler knew that the only way to gain power was through the ballot box.

Below: The NSDAP was founded on 24 February 1920, its first headquarters being a room in the Sternbräu beer hall in Munich. The Nazi party was only one among many far right wing völkisch movements of the time – but none of the other parties had Adolf Hitler as its spokesman.



for a great leader who would rescue Germany from her plight. If he had anyone in mind for this role at the time, it was probably General Ludendorff, Germany's de facto dictator 1916-18. Only in time would it dawn on Hitler that he himself was the leader-in-waiting.

Inflation provided Hitler with valuable political ammunition, but it handicapped the growth of the Nazi Party. The organisation remained largely dependent on contributions by its members and entrance fees to political meetings. Propaganda was largely self-financing, with the exception of the Party newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter* which, ironically, attracted significant donations from foreign right-wing groups. European right-wingers wanted a strong Germany as a bulwark against Bolshevism and funds came in from France, Czechoslovakia and Switzerland.

RUHR OCCUPATION

Nazi recruitment accelerated during 1922 as rumours began to circulate that Hitler was planning a coup d'état. In January 1923 the French occupied the Ruhr to compel the Berlin government to complete the reparation payments agreed at Versailles. This affront to German dignity temporarily halted politics as usual; for a moment the unity of 1914 re-asserted itself. Hitler surprised his closest followers by denouncing the government's call for passive resistance and threatened to expel any Party member taking part. He would not be deflected from his assaults on the Berlin regime; the 'real enemy,' he claimed, was not the French, but the 'November criminals.' Until Marxism, democracy, parliamentarianism and the Jews had been

destroyed, these internal 'enemies' would continue to paralyse Germany. It was a bold strategy, but it paid off.

PERPETUAL IRRITANT

The expansion of the SA continued. Its men were trained by the *Reichswehr* and, in common with most paramilitary forces, it handed over its weapons to the army in readiness for war with France. In turn, the army supported the NSDAP against the politicians when they tried to ban Hitler's meetings in January 1923. That the army pulled the strings was evident four months later when Hitler announced a massive parade on May Day, intended to break up a Social Democrat rally. At the last minute, the army refused to return the SA's weapons, and a furious Hitler had to content himself with a small rally outside of town.

Hitler's agitation against the Berlin regime continued throughout the summer of 1923. Ultimately it boxed him into a corner. Perpetual agitation without actual action was not possible. His followers wanted revolution now. The Bavarian government lacked the will to repress him; the army played its own game. On 1 September 1923 over 100,000 nationalists of various political parties came together at Nuremberg on the anniversary of Germany's victory over France at the Battle of Sedan in 1870 – the victory that paved the way for the establishment of the German Empire. Hitler was on the same podium as General Ludendorff, Prinz Ludwig Ferdinand of Bavaria and the leader of the umbrella organisation of 'patriotic associations,' *Oberstleutnant* Kriebel. The Berlin government had just capitulated to French



Street Presence

FOR A FEW SHORT MONTHS between November 1918 and April 1919, Munich was embroiled in virtual civil war. Events culminated in street battles involving 20,000 workers and soldiers, under the command of the 23-year-old revolutionary Rudolf Eglhofer, who were opposed by Prussian and Württemberg troops combined with *Freikorps* units. There could only be one outcome – the end of the Red Republic.

The disorders went down in popular memory as a 'rule of horror' when German citizens were subjugated by foreign elements in the service of Soviet Communism. This was very far from the truth but in a deeply conservative area such as southern Germany, with no democratic tradition the effect was to move the local mood far to the right.

In Munich Hitler found a willing audience ripe for exploitation by someone able to play on their fears. He demanded vengeance on the 'November criminals'; "German rebirth is externally only possible when the criminals are faced with their responsibility and delivered to their just fate."

He appealed most to the demoralised former frontline troops, who were more than willing to swap one uniform for another.



demands and ended its resistance to reparations. Inflation was spiralling uncontrollably. In 1914 there were 4.2 Marks to the dollar; by January 1923 there were 17,792; 4.6 million by August and 98 million a month later. By November a dollar would buy 4,200,000 million Marks! Savings were rendered worthless. Wildcat strikes secured almost weekly pay rises from employers – until companies collapsed. Communist agitation increased, with attempted take-overs in several states and a street battle in Hamburg.

On 26 September Gustav Ritter von Kahr had himself appointed State Commissar of Bavaria, with practically unlimited powers. While Berlin granted new authority to the army in case it had to intervene in Bavaria, Kahr banned Hitler's next series of meetings. Nazi leaders despaired that the appointment of the strong man Kahr would satisfy right-wing demands for 'action,' cutting the ground

from Hitler's feet. Kahr plotted with his police chief Seisser and General Hermann von Lossow; together with the *Kampfbund* alliance of paramilitary groups, they would march on Berlin. The assumption was that the *Reichswehr* would stand aside while parliamentary rule was snuffed out. No place was intended for Hitler and the Nazi Party.

There were numerous plots being hatched that autumn. Some of the *Kampfbund* supported Kahr, other groups would have nothing to do with him. Some of the right-wing elements favoured a local solution, elevating their wartime commander Prince Rupprecht to King of Bavaria. Meanwhile, Hitler was conscious his support was ebbing. The leader of the Munich SA warned that unless he acted now, the men would slip away.

General Lossow met the commander of the *Reichswehr*, General von Seeckt, but was unable to persuade him to join the plot.

With army resistance likely, there would be no chance of replicating Mussolini's March on Rome, the model that the *Kampfbund* groups had in mind.

NOW OR NEVER

After Hitler's attempted putsch, Lossow claimed he had told Hitler to wait a few weeks while he spoke to other *Reichswehr* commanders. But Hitler could not delay. His response was to trick Kahr to the *Bürgerbräukeller* on 7 November where he staged his disastrously ill-prepared uprising. By the afternoon of 8 November, with his supporters dispersed by police gunfire, Hitler's political career seemed finished. Nazi membership rapidly dwindled once he was imprisoned. No-one could have anticipated the remarkable transformation in Hitler's fortunes that was to come after his release.



SACHSENHAUSEN



Sachsenhausen was located 25 kilometres north of Berlin. Along with Dachau and Buchenwald it was one of the three main camps in the pre-war Nazi penal system.

Left: The first camp in the area – and one of the first camps established by the Nazis – was located in a disused brewery at Oranienburg near Berlin. Unlike its contemporary at Dachau, it was run by the SA until the SS took over in 1934.

Main picture: Sachsenhausen camp was established nearby about a year after Oranienburg was closed in 1935. Much larger than its predecessor, the inmates were initially used for forced labour at a brickworks on the Oder-Havel canal.



The first prisoners sent to the camps at Oranienburg arrived in March 1933. They were classed as Marxists – which meant that they were any kind of left-wing opponent of the National Socialist regime. From its earliest days the camps had a reputation for maltreatment.

THE FIRST BLOCKS at Sachsenhausen were built in the Autumn of 1936 by 50 inmates shipped from the Esterwegen camp on the Dutch border. The new camp had a triangular ground plan, with barracks radiating like a fan from a roll call area. The huts were surrounded by a wall 2.5 metres high, reinforced with an electric fence and eight watchtowers equipped with searchlights and machine guns. The huts were of wood, while the offices and administration buildings were built in brick. In 1938, 'T-Building' was added to house Eicke's Concentration Camp Inspectorate.

Since it was so close to Berlin, Sachsenhausen was a useful place for the Gestapo to send

prisoners who had been processed at their headquarters at 8 Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse. The camp was originally intended to house between 8,000 and 10,000 prisoners but at its height in 1944 over 40,000 were imprisoned there. During the camp's existence as many as 200,000 prisoners from 40 nations passed through – some 40,000 died.

POLITICAL PRISONERS

The first prisoners in the earlier Oranienburg camp were political enemies rounded up after Hitler came to power. They included Communists, Socialists, and journalists. Sachsenhausen's population was similar to start with, but grew to include Jews, Roma, 'anti-socials,' criminals, Jehovah's Witnesses and

homosexuals. Following Kristallnacht in November 1938, 1,800 Jews were sent to Sachsenhausen and 450 were murdered almost immediately.

With the outbreak of war, the mix grew to include soldiers discharged dishonourably from the Wehrmacht, SS members undergoing punishment, Soviet PoWs and captured resistance fighters. In 1940, 26,000 mainly Polish prisoners were delivered to the camp but were then transferred to labour camps all over the Reich.

Sachsenhausen was used to house VIP prisoners like the former Austrian Chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg and the industrialist Fritz Thyssen. World War I U-boat hero and holder of the *Pour le Merite*, Pastor Martin Niemöller who led the anti-Nazi

Lutheran Confessional Church was held in the camp at Hitler's express orders. Carl von Ossietzky, the writer and pacifist who had been imprisoned for criticism of the armed forces under the Weimar Republic was another Sachsenhausen inmate. While there he was awarded the 1935 Nobel Peace Prize – which the Nazis forbade him to receive. He died in Berlin on 3 May 1938 from TB he had contracted in the camp.

PROMINENT PRISONERS

'The Lion of Münster,' Cardinal-Archbishop Clemens August Graf von Galen was held in the camp following the July Plot of 1944. Stalin's son Vasili, captured on the Eastern Front in 1941, was held in the camp, but committed suicide in despair at



ORANIENBURG

Below: The first transport of 40 Marxists at Oranienburg were quickly joined by many more. Within six months the population had risen to just under one thousand, the maximum that could be held in the old brewery buildings.



his captivity.

Some senior Nazis also ended up in the camp. Martin Luther, a policy adviser in von Ribbentrop's Bureau and later in the Foreign Ministry, was a violent anti-Semite who served as the Foreign Ministry liaison with the SS. Following an abortive attempt to oust Ribbentrop, whom he said was mad, Luther was sent to Sachsenhausen concentration camp. Here he cultivated medicinal herbs and made two attempts at suicide. He was liberated by the Russians at the end of the war but died in May 1945. Another Nazi prisoner of Sachsenhausen was Prince Philip of Hesse. He was married to Princess Mafalda, daughter of King Victor Emmanuel of Italy.

Captain S. Payne Best was one of the two British Secret service agents kidnapped by the

SD at Venlo in then-neutral Holland on 8 November 1939. Payne-Best was sent to Sachsenhausen but survived the war, proving to have been a shrewd observer who recorded the character and weaknesses of successive camp commandants.

SLAVE LABOUR

Sachsenhausen's inmates were used as slave labour in local industries. The camp was the hub of a network of 61 satellite camps, often attached to major industrial plants. These included the Heinkel works in Germendorf where 7,000 prisoners worked, the Klinker Brick Works at Oranienburg on the Oder-Havel canal where 2,000 prisoners worked and the *Deutsche Maschinenfabrik AG* (DEMAG) tank plant in Falkensee. A grenade manufacturing plant was later set up at the brickworks.

Eight hundred camp inmates were used in a clothing and footwear factory where the most feared posting was to the unit that tested footwear for the Wehrmacht. The *Schuhläufer-Kommando* or 'Shoe Walker Squad' tested the durability of boots by exhausting long-distance marches. The SS Central Equipment Depot employed 500 prisoners while the SS signals and transport depot had 2,460.

Sachsenhausen was chosen by Alfred Naujocks of the SD as the secure establishment for 'Operation Bernhard,' which forged Sterling and US Dollar currency as well as documents. It used skilled engravers and printers who had been arrested by the Nazis. Their work was of such a high standard that 12 of their number were awarded the War Merit Medal.

Sachsenhausen was a major

medical experiment centre. In 1941 Soviet prisoners were killed during trials of a new *Gaswagen* or *S(pezial)-Wagen*. The 'Gas Van' was to be used as a mobile execution chamber in the East.

GANGRENE TESTS

Prisoners were deliberately wounded so that gangrenous infection could be cultured as a way of testing new antiseptics. In the summer of 1944 it was recorded that four out of eight prisoners died from experiments of an unknown kind. In September 1944 trials were conducted with poisonous ammunition. Prisoners were shot to test how long the bullets took to be effective. Trials of the lethality of hand grenades were also undertaken using prisoners as targets. At Sachsenhausen tests were conducted to show that Roma blood was inferior to that



SACHSENHAUSEN absorbed the Oranienburg camp, one of the original 'wild' camps established in 1933 by the SA. It had been used to house so-called *Schutzhaft* or 'Protective Custody' prisoners rounded up after the Reichstag Fire. The prisoners were employed on excavation work near the camp, and on road building and forestry.

Oranienburg's reputation for brutality and its limited prisoner capacity meant that Hermann Goering, the Prussian State President and acting interior minister, decided to run the camp down. In June 1934 the SA men who had been the guards were replaced by the SS.

Under both regimes prisoners were abused and beatings were sometimes fatal. The camp was closed in March 1935.

SS-Obersturmbannführer Dr Konrad Morgen, an SS Judge tasked with investigating concentration camp abuses by Himmler, later initiated proceedings against the last commandant of Oranienburg, Hans Loritz, on suspicion of arbitrary killings.

Right: Oranienburg's proximity to Berlin meant that its prisoner population was largely drawn from the capital, and included opposition politicians and journalists. After Goering began running the camp's population down in 1934, Oranienburg was relegated to a reserve camp.



of Aryans.

In August 1941 the SS set up the 'Z Station,' a building 30 metres by 18 metres. Ostensibly a medical examination room, it was in fact a disguised execution chamber. Prisoners were asked to be seated, whereupon an executioner hidden in a concealed booth behind the chair would shoot the victim in the nape of the neck using a pistol.

In the following months between 11,000 and 18,000 Soviet prisoners – not registered on the camp's lists – were executed in this way. They were killed in accordance with Hitler's *Kommissar Erlass*, which stated that political officers attached to Red Army units "hold views directly opposite to those of National Socialism. Hence these commissars must be eliminated."

The same 'medical facility' was also used to eliminate

prisoners who had been sent for *Sonderbehandlung* or 'Special Handling' by the RSHA. It is believed that resistance fighter Hans von Dohnányi, brother in law of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and one of the key figures in the July 1944 Conspiracy, died in this way in April 1945.

CAMP CREMATORIUM

Originally bodies were sent to Berlin to be burned, but a crematorium was added that was used to dispose of those who had died or had been executed by hanging, lethal injection or shooting. However the overcrowding, harsh weather,

Right: The prisoner population of Oranienburg quickly reduced. In November 1933 about three hundred were transferred to other camps in Prussia, and at Christmas the inmates were paraded to learn that a similar number would be amnestied.





Above: At the beginning, Sachsenhausen still paid lip-service to the notion of re-education. The poster states that "There is only one way to freedom." Among the "milestones" along the way it highlights industry, honesty, order, cleanliness, sobriety, truth, sacrifice and patriotism.

Below: With the outbreak of war conditions deteriorated sharply: in 1939 800 prisoners died – in 1940 the number of victims rose to more than 4,000. In autumn 1941 over 15,000 Soviet PoWs were killed in the camp.



or on foot. They were moved to camps like Bergen Belsen, Dachau and Mauthausen where they further added to the massive overcrowding and misery. Those that could not keep up with the march were, on Himmler's orders, shot by their SS guards. The last of the Sachsenhausen evacuees were finally liberated by the British at Schwerin on 3 May 1945.

LIBERATION

The camp was finally overrun by soldiers of the Polish and Russian 47th Army on 22/23 April 1945. Some 3,000 prisoners – mostly those too sick to march – were liberated.

The camp commandants under the Nazis were Hermann Baranowski who died in 1939, Hans Loehritz, who committed suicide in 1946 in the Neumünster internment camp, Walter Eisfeld, who died in 1940 and Anton Kaindl who was sentenced to life imprisonment by a Soviet military court.

He died in the USSR. Loehritz was transferred from the camp and on Himmler's orders posted to Norway. He had been found guilty of corruption since he used prisoners to build a yacht for his personal use. After his departure Payne Best noted that food and conditions improved a little.

POST-WAR PRISONERS

The grimest twist in the history of Sachsenhausen concentration camp was that the end of the war in 1945 did not see it close. As Special Camp No 7 it was used by the occupying Soviet power in eastern Germany from 1945 to 1950. It was the largest of eleven camps operated in the Soviet Zone.

Initially the prisoners were former Nazi functionaries or members of *Werewolf* – the Nazi resistance movement, but by 1950 many were simply political enemies of the USSR. It was not used for mass executions but the harsh conditions continued – of the 50,000 to 60,000 prisoners who were held there, at least 13,000 died.

poor food, heavy work and abuse also killed many prisoners.

Between March 1941 and November 1942 camp records state that 1,000 men were whipped on the block and 600 chained to a post by their arms. Punishments could also be collective, as on a day in October 1940 when 12,000 were ordered to stand in ranks from 5 am to 11 pm without food or water. When the same punishment was repeated in January 1941 over 400 prisoners died from cold.

GAS CHAMBER

In 1943 the camp constructed a gas chamber. It was used on special orders only. One such occasion was in February 1945 when the guards killed several thousand prisoners as the Soviet Army was approaching Berlin.

In March 1945, Count Bernadotte of Sweden managed to arrange for the release of Danes and Norwegians held in the camp. Many of the other inmates had been evacuated on death marches, being moved westwards in railway wagons



PRE-WAR CONCENTRATION CAMPS



NAZI LOOT

Left: Whereas Goering acquired art for personal aggrandisement, Hitler collected for posterity. He planned to be remembered by creating the greatest museum in the world at Linz. Europe's looted treasures were to provide the raw material for the collection.

One way the Nazis showed that they were masters of Europe was to seize the heritage of the occupied territories in the greatest art and bullion theft in recorded history.

Right: The art works seized by the Nazis suffered many fates. Some were destroyed as 'degenerate art'. Others, such as this painting by Pieter Breughel, were recovered by the Allies in 1945. Many have resurfaced after the war in art collections all over the world, having been acquired from dubious sources.





ON 7 APRIL 1945, at the Kaiseroda salt mine in the German village of Merkers near Eisenach, Thuringia, soldiers of the US Third Army found the Nazi 'treasure.' It was the bulk of the German Reichsbank gold reserve, along with vast stores of German and foreign currency and hundreds of works of art looted from the conquered countries of Europe. It had been moved there from Berlin on the orders of the Reichsbank's President, Dr Walther Funk, following severe damage to the bank during a daylight air raid by the USAAF on 3 February 1945. The *Volksgesicht* in the Berlin Law Courts had also been destroyed in this raid, killing the sinister judge Dr Roland Freisler.

The discovery of the secrets of the mine was accidental. It began when two Military Policemen of the US 357th Infantry Regiment, 90th Division, gave a lift to two French displaced persons (DPs). They were told that "that's the mine where the gold is." Their story was confirmed by a former prisoner of war, a British Sergeant from the 51st Highland Division, who had worked in the mine as part of the group that had unloaded the gold when it arrived.

BURIED TREASURE

The mine was immediately secured by the 712th Tank Battalion and 357th Infantry Regiment, who had captured Merkers on 4 April. On 7 April a team from the 90th Division HQ staff entered the mine. About a mile underground they discovered behind a hastily built wall a cavern 150 feet long, 75 feet wide and 12 feet high. The floor of the cavern was covered knee-high with over 7,000 numbered bags laid out in rows. The Americans counted 20 rows in all, some of them two or three sacks high, stretching right to the back of the cavern.

Inside each bag were gold coins or gold bars, weighing between 20 and 35 kilos to the bag. There were over 8,527 gold

bars altogether, weighing over 100 tonnes and valued at more than \$112,000,000. The minted gold coins – later officially valued at more than \$126,000,000 – included a million Swiss francs, a billion French francs and 711 bags of US \$20 gold pieces, \$25,000 to a bag. Altogether the gold bars and coin weighed 250 tonnes.

STOLEN TREASURE

Baled paper money was stacked against one wall and at the back, crammed in suitcases, trunks and boxes was a large quantity of gold and silver plate looted from private homes and institutions throughout Europe. All had been flattened with hammers to save space, then put into these containers to await an opportunity when they could be melted down into bars and ingots. There were sacks of dental gold and jewellery, silver cigarette cases, watches, wedding rings and even spectacles taken from the victims of the extermination camps.

At the time of the capture of the hoard, the Americans put a tentative estimate of its value at about \$315,000,000. A more systematic count later reduced this to \$238,490,000 – equivalent to more than two billion dollars today.

The reserves were not the only treasures the Americans discovered. An enormous number of paintings and other pieces of art, 400 tons in all, were stored in one of the tunnels. Some were wrapped in paper or sacking while others were simply stacked. The paintings had been collected from fifteen German museums and included works by Rembrandt, Titian, Van Dyck, Raphael, Dürer and Renoir.

PRICELESS ART

The complete collection was priceless but the most valuable item was the tiny 3,000-year-old statuette of the Egyptian queen Nefertiti. Other finds in neighbouring mines in the Merkers area included 400 tons of records from the Reich Patent



Above: Goering was the real driving force behind the Kunstraub (organised looting) and takes the award as the most assiduous collector of European treasures. As with most senior Nazis, he abused his position of authority, despoiling and looting at will.

Below: Goering's only check was the Führer, who had first choice of any loot for his projected museum at Linz. Nevertheless, the Reichsmarschall had a vast collection in his estates at Veldenstein and Karinhall – the latter was decked out with 52 pictures from the Cranach school alone.





Above: Nazi loot was hoarded in mines, tunnels, cloisters and caverns throughout the Reich. There were literally hundreds of these repositories which were discovered by the victorious Allies, containing millions of artifacts.

Below: The loot had to be catalogued and returned if at all possible to the rightful owners. The conditions were often far from ideal – at Heimboldsheim there was a fire which destroyed thousands of irreplaceable books.



Office – potentially as valuable as the gold, the records of the Wehrmacht High Command, two million books from Berlin libraries and the Goethe collection from Weimar.

On 12 April the Supreme Allied Commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower along with General Omar Bradley commanding the 12th Army Group and Lt General George S. Patton commanding the 3rd Army visited the mine. Soon afterwards the mine's contents were removed to Frankfurt under heavy escort for safekeeping.

The Merkers mine hoard was not the complete Reichsbank reserve. In the chaos which enveloped Germany at the end of the war it is estimated that Soviet, German and US military personnel stole a total of \$432,985,013 (nearly four billion dollars in 2000 values) from banks and secret caches. Even though this was the product of many individual thefts or 'acquisitions' of booty, as a criminal act against a state it must count as the greatest robbery in modern history.

PERKS OF VICTORY

Even though most of the Reich reserves had been moved, there were still enough gold and currency bonds in Berlin for the Red Army to enjoy a little looting when it had captured the city. Some 90 gold bars and 4,580,878 gold coins were taken from the Reichsbank in May 1945. On 15 May Major Feodor Novokov of the Red Army Intelligence removed Gold Currency Bonds issued against the Westphalia, Weimar Industrial bank from the Reichsbank. Their value at the time was \$400,000,000.

Before the final collapse of the Third Reich some of the last stocks of gold and foreign currency were moved by road and rail from Berlin. Two special trains took the treasure to hiding places in the mountains of the Mittenwald on the Austrian border. Estimates of the what the treasure consisted of vary, but the

load was reported to have included 364 bags of gold each containing 2 bars; four boxes thought to contain bullion; 25 boxes each containing four bars; two bags of gold coins; six cases thought to contain Danish coins; 11 boxes allegedly containing gold; 20 airtight boxes thought to contain gold and 89 bags of foreign currency from Europe, the Middle East and USA.

MOUNTAIN CACHES

Oberst Franz Pfeiffer, the Commandant of the local Mountain Infantry School, was ordered to select officers to take the gold and coinage to remote locations and dig them into caches. In the confusion of the last months of the war bank and Party officials wanted to ensure that these stocks of gold and hard currency did not suffer the same fate as the hoard at Merkers.

It was not safe, however. In June 1945 US Army Sergeant Singleton, along with former *Gebergsjäger* officers, assisted an un-named US officer in locating and removing 25 boxes containing 100 gold bars, valued in 1945 at \$1,406,595. He drove away with it and after that it disappeared.

Other caches were concealed in south Germany and Austria. Funds from the SS and the German Foreign Ministry were stolen or hidden. The RSHA (Reich Security HQ) transported 50 cases each weighing 50kg of gold coins and articles, two million US Dollars, two million Swiss francs, five cases of diamonds and precious stones, a stamp collection worth at least five million gold Marks and 50 kg of gold bars. Some 6.5 tons of 'Ribbentrop gold' were reported at Schloss Fuschl, near Salzburg in Austria in May 1945, but then disappeared.

CORRUPTION

Corruption in the Occupying US Army in south Germany was fuelled by hard currency. In June 1945 Major Roger Rawley recovered a truckload of foreign currency worth \$8,000,000 on



TROPHY Brigades

PLUNDERING A CONQUERED nation is a time-honoured tradition. But never before had it been carried out on such a vast and unscrupulous scale as under Nazi occupation. The range of the plunder taken by Germany was astounding.

During World War II the German army, in a practice copied later by the Soviets, employed special 'trophy brigades' whose main purpose was to seize paintings, sculpture, and other cultural artifacts from conquered nations. The Germans, in keeping with the Nazi disdain for non-German culture, destroyed much of the art

seized in the countries they overran because it did not conform to the National Socialist aesthetic.

In the early days it was mainly Jewish collections which were 'secured,' but the looting later extended to any 'enemies of the Reich.' By the end of the war even public museums were plundered. According to an incomplete accounting of 15 July 1944, some 22,000 art objects had been acquired, among them 5,281 paintings by artists from van Eyck to Watteau. The most prominent theft involved the Amber room of the Russian Tsars which disappeared after the war in 1945.



Above: The hunched figure of Adolf Hitler gazes at a scale model of the planned new city of Linz. He intended to make Linz the cultural centre of Europe, with the largest art and painting gallery in the world. His dream occupied much of his time, even in his last days in the bunker in 1945.

Left and below left: After the war many a Nazi justified their looting by claiming that what looked like theft was in truth a noble attempt to protect European heritage from wartime destruction.

Below: In one of the few instances when German actions genuinely preserved historic items, the treasures of Monte Cassino are taken to Rome for safekeeping ahead of the Allied attack on the monastery.





the Oberau road. He handed it over to Major Kenneth Asa McIntyre, Town Major of Garmisch-Partenkirchen. A portion of this recovery was last seen in Major McIntyre's office.

BANK RAID

The majority of the thefts were on a much smaller scale. Typically, two gold bars worth \$30,000 together with British and US currency to the value of \$20,000 and £10,000 were taken from the Berchtesgaden Savings Bank and deposited in the Land Central Bank, Munich. They subsequently disappeared.

Under US control the Land Central Bank, Munich was remarkably insecure. When 17 bags of Reichsbank foreign currency were recovered by three German nationals from the caches on the Klausenkopf in south Germany in May and June 1945, they were finally tracked down by the US Army in August that year. They had been hidden in two locations and a sum of \$407,235 and £405 found at Garmisch disappeared from the Land Central Bank.

Some senior German officers used more direct methods to secure financial security even

before the end of the war. On 22 April 1945 General Josef Spacil, head of Amt II of the RSHA, entered the Berlin Reichsbank and at gun point demanded and received jewels, diamonds, securities and foreign currency worth \$9,131,000.

These were handed to *Obersturmbannführer* Otto Skorzeny for safe keeping. SS General Gottlob Berger took foreign currency worth over \$2,000,000 from the Munich Reichsbank on April 24. In May 1945 about \$1,816,805 was recovered. After the war Berger served ten years in gaol and died in Stuttgart in January 1975.

Criminality had been a defining feature of the Third Reich and crimes driven by Nazi gold marked its end, even casting a shadow over the struggle by Germans to rebuild their country after 1945.



Above: Soviet Foreign Minister Viacheslav Molotov is accompanied by Hermann Goering on a visit to the newly completed Reich Chancellery in 1940. In the background can be seen part of a Gobelin tapestry. Hitler had a predictably conservative taste for traditional works of art and accordingly he ordered his agents to cleanse Europe's museums of examples from the more modern schools.

Below: The new rulers of Europe wanted to demonstrate their power by wholesale looting. They also displayed their avarice, and sometimes even their good taste. Alcohol can be as sound an investment as gold or bricks and mortar. In this picture allied troops are shown escorting seized wine back to its originating estates in Bordeaux.





Economics of SLAUGHTER

AS WELL AS FULFILLING their perverted race doctrines, the genocidal murder of Europe's Jews also proved financially lucrative to the Nazis. Indeed the promise of personal enrichment was in some cases the sole motivation for slaughter.

Walther Funk as the head of the Reich Economics Chamber did a deal with the SS, making the Reichsbank a repository for loot taken from the victims of Nazism. The German Foreign office also played its part, especially through contacts in the Swiss capital Bern – items referred to as *Judenschmuck* or 'Jewish jewellery' often came in the diplomatic pouch. The Nazis' Bern agent then exchanged the goods for industrial diamonds – vitally important to the German war effort, but the sale and export of which had been officially outlawed by the Swiss government. If the gold looted from individuals was not in negotiable form then it was melted down. As a result, gold originating from the persecuted in the Reichsbank's reserves was not immediately distinguishable from genuine bullion.

Above, left and below left: Germans became ever more obsessed with gold as the Reichsmark declined in value. This flight to gold led them to hoard vast reserves and much of it found its way into the bank vaults of the secretive Swiss. Where possible, the Allies returned the gold to the rightful owners. But half a century later the work is still far from complete.

Right and below: Walther Funk shared responsibility for the looting of the gold reserves of the Occupied territories. In 1942 he made a secret accord with Himmler and the SS, which enabled the Reichsbank to store the cash, gold, jewellery (below) and other valuables of deported and murdered Jews.



THE HOLOCAUST



**Life in Germany's
concentration camps
was hard and brutal.
Existence was a
constant battle for
survival – a struggle
in which winning
meant being alive
at the end of the day.**

ONE DAY IN HELL



From the beginning, inmates of Germany's concentration camp system were subject to a regime of hard, brutal work. In the early days, it was intended entirely as a punishment, but the SS soon learned they could make money out of slave labour.

LIFE IN A concentration camp as a prisoner was a daily or even hourly struggle for survival. From the moment the victim of the Nazis arrived at the gates, with their grim motto *Arbeit Macht Frei* – Work will set you free – life or death turned on a guard's whim.

Konzentrationslager or Concentration Camps came into existence in 1933. The early camps were largely run by men whose experience was shaped by their time in the army in World War I, so parades, roll calls, uniforms, ranks and saluting featured in the camp routine.

For a prisoner who had been sent to a *Konzentrationslager* or passed the initial *selektion* at a death camp, processing included the issue of a uniform with identifying coloured triangle, tattooing a number, having their head shaved and being assigned to a barrack block.

They had a very short time to acquaint themselves with the rules, regulations and routine of the *Konzentrationslager*. The day

began at 04.00, with Kapos – 'trusties' or inmate foremen – shouting to wake up the prisoners in their three tier wooden bunks. In the periods of worst overcrowding, during the war, up to five emaciated prisoners would have been squeezed into a bed space suitable for one person. If one man wanted to turn over under the thin blanket all the others had to follow. The wooden barracks were bitterly cold in winter or dusty and hot in summer, but sleep would have come from sheer exhaustion.

START OF DAY

The first priority of a prisoner was to find boots or clogs – without taking care his own might have been stolen during the night. Without them the prisoner would be effectively condemned to death because he or she would be unable to work. The next priority would be to turn the shapeless straw-filled mattress into a military style 'boxed bed'. It was an almost impossible task, and presented the Kapos with more

opportunities to beat prisoners.

With the bed made there was a dash to the inadequate sanitary block. Prisoners had only a few minutes to splash water over themselves, all the while being harassed by the Kapos.

A successful breakfast, as with all meals, hung on the possession of a mess tin and spoon. Without a mess tin the prisoner has nothing with which to collect coffee or stew, and without a spoon he could not scoop out the small amounts of solid food in the bottom of the cauldrons. The Kapos distributed approximately 10 ounces of coarse bread and some tasteless 'coffee' without milk or sugar. If the prisoner was favoured or lucky he or she might receive some margarine or a thin slice of sausage with their bread. Strong willed or fit prisoners knowing that the bread would be the only solid food for the next 24 hours would set a portion aside.

Even while he or she was eating breakfast the Kapos would indulge themselves in sadistic fun by throwing the bread into

the mud or jolting a prisoner trying to drink the coffee. If food was 'wasted' by being spilled or dropped the prisoner ran the risk of being punished.

MORNING ROLL CALL

After this hurried meal the prisoners doubled to the parade ground for the roll call where they stood in rows of ten. Everyone had to be present, even the dead who had expired over night. The bodies were put in front of the group or outside the barrack block. Under the direction of SS guards and officers, the Kapos counted the thousands of prisoners. It was a tense time since a mistake by a Kapo meant that he would be punished and the count would begin again.

Sometimes the prisoners stood to attention in rain or snow for hours as the counting was repeated. In their thin striped cotton drill uniforms inmates were vulnerable to colds and 'flu – which were often fatal in their debilitated condition. Some actually died on parade. At the



Above: A Sonderkommando or special work party at the Flossenbürg camp collects the bodies of inmates who have died in the night. Inmates had no choice about working amid such horror: refusal to do so would probably have meant their own execution.

Below: In early Nazi propaganda, inmates were shown eating good if plain food in clean dining halls. In reality inmates were lucky to get solid food at all, and what they did get they often had to prepare themselves with inadequate facilities out in the open.



end of the roll call the dead were collected by a prisoner detail and taken to the camp crematorium.

Work followed the roll call. On arrival at the camp, while they were being processed, prisoners were asked whether they had a skill. Trades and professions like cobbler, jeweller, tailor or chemist could be a passport to survival since work for guards or Kapos might be 'paid' in food, and the conditions were better than in the open. At Auschwitz the IG Farben Plant, though brutally administered, gave qualified prisoners like the Italian chemist Primo Levi the chance to survive the war.

DOING DEALS

Some astute prisoners realised the ability to do odd jobs for Kapos made conditions more bearable, and lacking the skills themselves often sub-contracted the work to other more qualified or skilled prisoners. For those with no skills the only option was back-breaking physical work outside the camp.

In some *Konzentrationslager* orchestras were formed from talented prisoners, using instruments collected from loot from the transports. In the morning the band would form up at the gate to play brisk marches. If there was no band the SS

guards often ordered prisoners to sing marching songs.

LABOUR GANGS

At the gate work teams split off to their allotted tasks. In many cases, especially in the early days, the work had no utility but was intended simply as a punishment – and was often a death sentence. If a prisoner was lucky enough to be issued with a tool, the 12 to 14 hour day would be bearable. Otherwise the work had to be done with bare hands. Later in the war prisoners were used on dangerous tunnelling and construction jobs for defences or underground factories.

Anyone who was fatigued or slow was liable to receive brutal beatings as a 'saboteur.' These could be fatal. If the man died his body had to be carried back to camp at the end of the day. Despite this, prisoners worked out techniques for doing the minimum possible without being detected. As a result, productivity, while cheap, was much lower than outside the camp system.

After a short mid-morning break in which a watery soup was served, work began again, signalled by a whistle blast. The afternoon ended with another whistle blast and the prisoners formed up to march back to camp. At the gates the camp band formed up to greet them, this time with waltzes.

EVENING RITUAL

The evening roll call followed. Again the prisoners were formed up in lines of ten and the dead were paraded as well. These parades could drag on for hours and the SS guards also used them for public hangings of prisoners who had attempted to escape or who had infringed the complex rules of the *Konzentrationslager*.

Hangings might be single or collective. In these circumstances the victims were usually hanged in succession, watching and waiting for their turn to die. At the end of the parade the prisoners were marched past the gallows as a warning.



Masters of Life and death

LIFE OR DEATH in the camps depended on the whim of the guards. The *Totenkopfverbände*, founded by Theodor Eicke, were in origin very different from the rest of the SS. Himmler's concept of a racially pure praetorian elite meant that many of the early members of the SS were misfits. They had been chosen more for their abilities as brawlers than for their ideological purity and commitment to the Nazi ideal.

Eicke, who was very much in the street thug mould himself, found places for these square pegs in his guard formations. The old fighters provided the camp administration, and were the men who actually handled the prisoners inside the camps.

However, there was another group within the guard formations. The watchtower guards, who also provided the security force for outside work parties, were generally very much younger volunteers. They were often farm boys who lacked the education to succeed in other branches of the SS, but who were nevertheless strong and fit – and who could be easily moulded by the charismatic psychopath Theodor Eicke.

Right: SS-Totenkopf guards from Dachau supervise political prisoners as they build a railway track by hand. Most of the techniques of oppression used in the camps were developed at Dachau: taking their cue from Theodor Eicke, the guard force looked on their prisoners as being scarcely human.

Below: SS guards at the Plaszow camp near Krakow. There was much more movement between the Totenkopf and the Waffen-SS than has generally been recognised – the NCO on the right has an Iron Cross First Class which was only awarded for front-line combat.



With the evening roll call over supper was served. It was soup similar to that served at midday. The only opportunity to bulk out the meal came if a prisoner had saved bread from the morning.

Finally the prisoners returned to their barracks. Here the *Blockführer* was waiting. Normally green triangle criminal prisoners, *Blockführers* exercised their petty powers with nocturnal 'exercises' like crawling, jumping or running until prisoners fainted. Finally prisoners collapsed into an exhausted sleep and another day was over.

In extermination camps –

Vernichtungslager – only a small proportion of the transportees were selected to work. For the majority, the aim of the SS command was to speed them from the freight cars or railway carriages into the gas chambers. For most of the victims of the Holocaust, life in the camps meant death.

Those prisoners that were selected to live – mostly young fit men – knew that their lives were on the line if there was any trouble. Their tasks included assisting their less fortunate fellows in stripping and piling their clothes and belongings

before going into the 'showers.' They even found themselves giving firm instructions about where their clothes were to be stacked for convenient retrieval – to people who they knew were to die in the next few minutes.

WORK OR DIE

For the guards, the prisoners were an expendable resource. The transports were constantly delivering new prisoners to camps and so the solution was to keep the population down. At the death camps, those who were too young, old or infirm for work were selected for execution as

soon as they arrived. This meant that sometimes a mother and children would be separated from the father/husband and gassed on arrival.

Even those selected to live had little future. Labourers would be worked for a few more months before they too were deemed unfit and selected for extermination. Survivors knew the fate that awaited them following a selection, and as they ran or paraded naked in front of the SS officers they would make desperate attempts to look fit and healthy, purely in the hope that they would survive.



"SMILING AL"

Kesselring

The tall genial Bavarian, Albert Kesselring greets the Führer in France in 1940. To his right is General Rommel. Kesselring's political ability and astute brain ensured that he was to outshine his contemporary. By 1942 Rommel had become Kesselring's troublesome subordinate.

This charismatic, charming and gifted communicator from South Germany was also a great field commander. His two seasons in the Italian theatre marked him out as a genius in the art of defensive warfare.

ALBERT KESSELRING, nicknamed 'Smiling Al' by the soldiers and airmen under his command because of his broad grin, was a Luftwaffe Field Marshal who proved an able land commander. He was also uniquely a senior commander who retained Hitler's confidence without compromising his own independence.

BAYREUTH BEGINNINGS

Born in Marktsheft, Bavaria on 20 November 1885, he was raised in Bayreuth where his father was a schoolmaster and town councillor. In 1904 he joined the Army as a probationer in the 2nd Bavarian Foot Artillery at Metz as an officer candidate. He was selected for the German General Staff and also trained as a balloon

observer. In 1918 he held appointments on the Staff at Corps and Army level under Prinz Rupprecht. The tall, genial Bavarian made friends easily, and his long-lasting acquaintance with Hermann Goering dates from the war years.

After the war Kesselring stayed on in the military, serving in the exclusive *Truppenamt* (Germany's covert replacement for the outlawed German General Staff) and in 1922 was appointed Chief of Staff to von Seeckt.

Promoted *Generalmajor* in 1932 he went on a year later, at his own request, to transfer to the Air Ministry as civilian director of administration. When the Luftwaffe was unveiled in 1935 Kesselring was on Erhard Milch's staff in the already faction-riven *Oberkommando der Luftwaffe*. Goering succeeded in

pushing his man forward as the Luftwaffe's new Chief of Staff after Walther Wever's death on 3 June 1936.

NO HEAVY BOMBERS

While chief of the General Staff Kesselring, along with Milch and Ernst Udet forbade further development of a four engined bomber. This decision would deprive the Luftwaffe of a strategic bomber capable of prosecuting the air war effectively against Britain in 1940-41 and later of hitting Soviet factories relocated to sites beyond the Urals. In a statement issued on the subject on 17 March 1954 Kesselring defended his decision explaining that the Luftwaffe had been created covertly and with an operational role of supporting the Army in the land battle.



Kesselring found it impossible to work with Milch, the State Secretary of the *Reichsluftfahrtministerium* and applied for retirement or an operational post. Goering promoted him General of Flyers and in 1937 he was appointed Commander of *Luftflotte 1*.

EARLY SUCCESS

Under his command *Luftflotte 1* supported Bock's Army Group North in 1939 in Poland. Kesselring was quick to see the potential of Ju 87 Stukas as close support bombers, switching them around the battlefield. Supposedly to neutralise Warsaw as a communications hub, he also directed a terror bombing campaign of the Polish capital. As the 'Victor of Warsaw' Kesselring was awarded the *Ritterkreuz* (Knight's Cross).

In 1940 he took command of *Luftflotte II* in Flanders. It was this air fleet that attacked Rotterdam, supported German paratroops at Eben Emael and attempted to destroy the British trapped at Dunkirk. Kesselring protested to Goering that the mission of destroying the Dunkirk pocket was completely beyond the strength of his forces, but the *Reichsmarschall* insisted that the *Luftwaffe* could complete the job begun by the Army. Kesselring was promoted *Feldmarschall* in 1940 at the end of the campaign in France.

BATTLE OF BRITAIN

There are conflicting accounts of his role in the Battle of Britain. Some say he favoured concentrating his bombers against RAF airfields and put the British under extreme pressure. However others say that on the basis of poor *Luftwaffe* intelligence he supported Goering in the switch from attacks on the RAF to civilian and commercial targets.

Kesselring's bombers and fighters spearheaded Operation Barbarossa, supporting Army Group Centre during the invasion of the USSR in June 1941. The *Luftwaffe* played a vital role in the offensive, but non-combat

As one of the Luftwaffe's planners during the 1930s, Kesselring must share some of the responsibility for the air arm's ultimate failure. Although the air force was a crucial and valuable tactical weapon, the lack of a strategic bombing arm was a contributing factor to German defeat.



losses were severe.

Kesselring moved before the worst of the troubles in the East developed. On 28 November 1941 he secured an appointment as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces in the Mediterranean area (Italy and North Africa). In this capacity he gave Rommel valuable help both in logistic and combat operations. He was a keen proponent of Operation Hercules, the proposed capture of Malta by a combined air and sea assault. Bomber squadrons under his command based in the Sicilian airfields of Catania and Gerbini, Trapani, Comiso and Gela made the 80 km flight to the island to

pound the harbours and airfields. If the island had been captured it would have allowed supplies to flow freely to the *Afrika Korps* across the Mediterranean.

Kesselring's personal charm enabled him to make friends with senior Italian commanders and even Benito Mussolini, but relations with his mercurial subordinate Erwin Rommel were always difficult.

DEFENSIVE GENIUS

Kesselring reacted quickly to the Allied Torch landings in November 1942 in North Africa and airlifted troops from Sicily to the Tunisian bridgehead using huge Me 323 *Gigants* as well as

Ju 52 transports. Although he could not drive the Allies from the continent, he did succeed in delaying the conquest of Tunis by six months.

Kesselring could not prevent the loss of Sicily in the campaign lasting from 10 July – 17 August 1943, but a well-executed withdrawal across the Strait of Messina saved 100,000 Italian and German troops, 9,800 vehicles and 47 tanks.

When in September 1943 Italy surrendered, troops under his command raced southwards to occupy Italy and disarm Italian troops. So rapid was his response that the Allied beachhead at Salerno was nearly lost. Only the



Above: Kesselring and his opponent Erhard Milch watch the operation to occupy the Sudetenland early in 1939. Two years before, Kesselring's career had almost been finished after falling out with Milch. But the patronage of Hermann Goering rescued him.

Below: Kesselring was made Oberbefehlshaber South and commander of Army Group C in 1943. He directed ground operations in Sicily and Italy from July 1943 to October 1944. His retreats in the theatre and his conduct of the battles of Salerno and Cassino bear the stamp of genius.



Above: Hitler said of the popular Kesselring: "I reckoned that politically he was an idealist, but that militarily he was an optimist. I don't believe you can be a successful military commander unless you are an optimist."

northwards march of the British 8th Army took the pressure off Salerno.

HOLDING FAST

Hitler had been prepared to remove Kesselring to Norway and give Rommel control of Italy, but on 6 November he relented. As *Oberbefehlshaber Süd* (Commander-in-Chief South) Kesselring conducted a series of actions on defence lines across the Italian peninsula. Hitler had ordered that Italy should be held south of Rome.

Kesselring realised that the longer he obeyed the Führer's wishes, the longer he delayed USAAF and RAF bombers from operating from bases in Italy where they could strike targets in Austria and southern Germany.

TO THE GUSTAV LINE

Accordingly, the Field Marshal master-minded the construction of the Gustav line. This defensive barrier incorporated the river Garigliano, the Apennines and the monastery of Monte Cassino, and held the Allies from January to May 1944.

Work on the Gustav Line began as soon as the Allies landed at Salerno and Kesselring

ordered his troops to conduct a fighting withdrawal through the autumn.

Kesselring's tactical genius was amply demonstrated when in an attempt to outflank the Gustav Line the Allies landed at Anzio, a port on the western coast of Italy on 22 January 1944.

ANZIO STALEMATE

Initially they achieved complete surprise, but Kesselring reacted quickly calling down the 1 *Fallschirmjäger Korps* and 76th Corps held as reserves based near Rome. He did not have to withdraw troops from the Gustav Line and Hitler urged him to throw the Allies back into the sea. The beachhead at Anzio was effectively under siege until 23 May 1944 when Allied troops broke through the Gustav Line.

A combination of Kesselring's tactical skill and the US General Mark Clark's ambition to see the US 5th Army liberate Rome allowed the German forces to evade encirclement and establish the 16 km deep Gothic Line from La Spezia on the west to the Adriatic between Pesaro and Cattolica. This line was held until late October 1944.

On 25 October, Kesselring



Ardeatine Caves



ON 24 MARCH 1944 the German Chief of Police for Rome, SS *Obersturmführer* Herbert Kappler, had 355 Italians arrested and executed in caves near Rome. The massacre was in reprisal for a guerrilla attack by Communist partisans the previous day on the Via Rasella in which 33 Waffen-SS were killed and 60 severely wounded.

Hitler at first ordered shootings on the basis of 50 civilians for every dead soldier. Kesselring – the Italian theatre commander –

was put in an impossible situation. Through strenuous argument he did succeed in reducing the 'quota' to 10. He hoped that this reduced tally could be met without the death of innocents. He therefore ordered that only prisoners already under a death sentence should be selected.

But a trawl of the gaols did not produce enough prisoners. So Kappler ordered further arrests. This meant that among the victims in the atrocity were women and two 14-year-old boys.



Above: Kesselring meets with Field Marshal Graziani, Fascist Minister of Defence in Mussolini's Salò government. Five days after this picture was taken Kesselring was gravely injured in a car accident, and was hospitalised for three months.

Above left: Within twenty four hours of the terrorist action, 335 people were loaded onto lorries and driven to a network of caves on the Via Ardeatine. At 3.30pm the executions started, each victim was ordered to kneel and was then shot in the back of the head. By 8pm it was all over. The bodies were subsequently exhumed and given Christian burial once the German lines had been pushed beyond Rome.

was severely injured in a road accident. Following successful brain surgery he took up his OB South post again on 15 January 1945.

From 25 March to 6 May 1945 Kesselring was responsible for combat operations in western Germany as *Oberbefehlshaber West*, based in his home town of Bayreuth. Ever the optimist he introduced himself to the staff of his demoralised HQ with the words "Good morning gentlemen I am the new V3." He surrendered to the Americans at the Berchtesgaden Hotel on 15 May.

SOLDIER TO THE LAST

Kesselring's performance is the more remarkable for the fact that the senior Allied commanders were able to read his signals through ULTRA intercepts and yet he delayed and outfought

them for two years in Italy.

After release from prison in 1952 Kesselring wrote his memoirs, *Soldat bis zum letzten Tag* – A Soldier to the Last Day; a book that was uncritical of Hitler. He became the head of the *Stahlhelm*, veterans organisation, and died of heart failure in Bad Nauheim on 16 July 1960 at the age of 74. He is buried in a small cemetery at Bad Wiessee, near Munich. All that appears on his tombstone is his name and rank.

Right: Although exonerated for his part in the Ardeatine caves massacre, Kesselring was still sentenced to death by a British military court in Venice for other war crimes. Churchill among many thought the sentence too severe and successfully appealed to British Prime Minister Clement Attlee. The sentence was commuted to life imprisonment in October 1947 and he was released from a civilian gaol in Werl, West Germany on 23 October 1952.





To the Gustav Line

Italy 1943/44

The sun sets on the German defences. The Italian terrain lent itself perfectly to a determined defender – the mountains and narrow passes were worth several divisions to an experienced commander.

German theatre commander Albert Kesselring was determined to deny the Allies an easy victory in Italy. Whilst scratch forces kept the invaders at bay in the south, he built up a near impregnable barrier across the peninsula – the Gustav line. The way north to Rome was barred.

RESCUED FROM his mountain gaol by SS commando leader Otto Skorzeny, Benito Mussolini was re-established in northern Italy. Yet this was not the *Duce* of old. He had his son-in-law, Count Ciano shot for siding with the Grand Council that voted him out of office, but real power in Italy lay with the Germans. It would remain so throughout the short life of the so-called Republic of Saló. Although the 'Italian Social Republic' continued to field an

army and air force, Mussolini spent most of his time with his mistress Clara Petacci. When it came at last to peace negotiations in 1945, the German commanders in Italy dealt with the Allies without informing Mussolini – or Hitler.

GERMANY ALONE

At the end of 1943 however, there were few thoughts of surrender. Field Marshal Albert Kesselring was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the newly established Army Group 'C'. His brief was to hold the



The American misconduct of the Anzio landings afforded German propaganda virtually its last opportunity to parade masses of captured Allied troops. Three months after this photo captive and captured would reverse roles.

Allies as far south as possible; if British and American bombers could operate from Italian air fields, the strategic bomber offensive against Germany would become more dangerous and the Allies would be able to exploit the Adriatic to their advantage. The guerrilla war in Yugoslavia was already tying down large bodies of troops: with the Allies able to sustain Tito's partisan army, the drain on German resources would accelerate. A new guerrilla war was beginning within German-occupied Italy too. It was no

more than a nuisance at first, but a nasty cycle of ambushes and atrocities would gather pace over the next 12 months.

German forces consisted of two armies, the 14th (*Generaloberst* von Mackensen) and 10th (*Generaloberst* Vietinghoff). They held the winter defence line built in the wake of the Salerno landings, a succession of entrenchments, minefields and bunkers running from Gaeta in the west through Cassino and up the valley of the river Rapido, through the Maiella mountains and then along the

river Sangro to the Adriatic coast. The Germans called it the 'Gustav' line, which the Allies knew; it was also known as the 'line of no retreat,' which the Allies didn't.

HOLDING THE LINE

South of the Gustav line the Germans created a number of other fortified lines, each intended to delay the Allied advance. The ground was ideal for the defence: mountain passes and narrow coastal plains were blocked by determined rearguards. There was often no

alternative but to make a frontal attack, and the Germans would always slip away at the last minute rather than fight to the last. Booby-traps and minefields discouraged energetic retreat. Aggressive night patrolling – by both sides – made this a 24-hour-a-day war for the frontline infantry.

The southern-most German defences, the 'Viktor' line was penetrated in October. Campobasso was taken by the 1st Canadian Division, while Termoli fell to an amphibious assault. The 'Barbara' line was



Left and below left: The German reverse at Kursk in the East had left Hitler with no choice but to go onto the defensive. This shift did however free up additional badly needed divisions for the Italian Front which were rushed in to combat the landings first at Salerno and then at Anzio. Renewed German vigour ensured that the battle for Italy was not going to be the walk-over that had been expected. The problems for Mark Clark's 5th and Montgomery's 8th Armies were further compounded by the low priority given to the Italian theatre of operations. The Allies were preparing to invade France in the coming year and supplies were accordingly prioritised to that front.

Bottom left: A four-barrel 20-mm Flak gun manned by the Luftwaffe in action against enemy infantry. With ever-increasing Allied threats from the air and ground the Germans were compelled to use all available weapons in dual roles.



ruptured in November when Mondragone was captured and British and American troops crossed the river Trigno. General Herr's LXXXVI *Panzerkorps* contested the Adriatic coast yard-by-yard and fell back in good order to the 'Bernhardt' line, the last defensive positions before the 'Gustav' line. General von Senger und Etterlin's XIV *Panzerkorps* did the same on the west coast.

BRITISH SNAILS

To attack the 'Bernhardt' line, General Montgomery first had to cross the river Sangro, its waters in full spate after heavy autumn rains. Bridgeheads were established in the teeth of sharp German counter-attacks, and by 22 November the British were across in strength. The river Foro was crossed on 8 December, but the city of Ortona was thoroughly fortified by German paratroops. The Canadian division's attack bogged down in a maze of medieval streets, defended with stubborn courage and diabolical skill. A building, captured after a hard fight, blew up shortly afterwards, wiping out a whole Canadian infantry platoon. The Germans had concealed explosives in the cellar, converting it into a giant time-bomb. Other buildings had rearmost walls removed: if the



buildings were captured, the Germans could fire anti-tank rockets directly into the rooms and retake them. The Canadians copied the time-bomb trick to lure 20 German paras to their doom, and employed 17-pdr anti-tank guns to pick off enemy strongpoints. Batteries of 25-pdr field guns blew the roofs of buildings which were then attacked with mortars, lobbing their bombs into the enemy-held rooms.

NO WAY FORWARD

Orsogna, further inland, required three divisional-scale assaults before the Germans were ejected. The end of 1943 found LXXXVI *Panzerkorps* still holding Pescara, and the British commander General Alexander despairing of achieving anything on the eastern coast.

On the western side of Italy, Lt.-General Mark Clark's 5th Army captured Monte Camino in December. Alexander re-deployed his forces to give Clark 12 divisions while a much reduced British 8th Army had six, of which only one was British. General Montgomery flew home to prepare for D-Day; command of the 8th Army passed to General Leese. Mark Clark was ordered to crack the Gustav line at Monte Cassino and attack up the line of the



Death of a Monastery



Above: On the morning of 15 February 1944, 142 four-engined and 87 twin-engined American bombers flew over Monte Cassino in three waves. They dropped 453 tons of high explosive and incendiary bombs. The Abbey was reduced to a total ruin, which the Germans then took over.

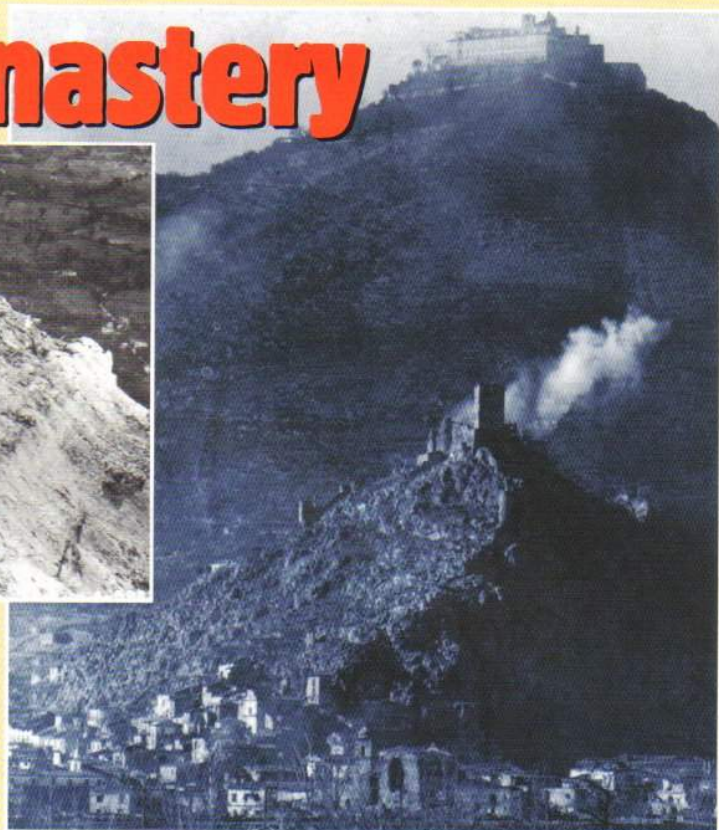
Right: The rule of mountain warfare is that whoever is master of the hill is master of the valley. The Allied plan was to storm down the Liri Valley towards the Anzio beachhead. To do this they needed to take the high ground on both sides. This they succeeded in doing, but it took them five months.

TO ALLIED COMMANDERS surveying the killing grounds in front of the town of Monte Cassino, it must have seemed that the Abbey of St Benedict was mocking them. Standing stolidly atop the 560 metre hill, the Allies thought it was at best used as an artillery observation post and at worst as an arms repository. In fact the Germans had respected the sanctity of the Church and only three soldiers were stationed anywhere near it. They were three MPs stationed there to keep soldiers out.

Eventually the Allied command opted to destroy the monastery prior to the next assault. Although Allied air and ground attacks succeeded in reducing much of the monastery and its outer walls, the shelling did not destroy the subterranean chambers, which were to provide excellent shelter for the defenders. They would emerge from these time and again to repel determined but suicidal Allied assaults.

Right: The Abbey of St Benedict was a religious foundation of great importance in which the body of St Benedict was preserved. The Germans managed to evacuate the Abbot and his monks together with the Abbey's treasures to Rome as the bombing started.

Below: The destruction of both the Abbey and the town was a boon to defenders and a massive headache for the attackers. The Allies could not use their numerical and armoured superiority, and every pile of rubble became a defensible position. The Germans had been forced to learn this bitter lesson at Stalingrad.



Above: The Allies may finally have decided to bomb the Abbey due to a misinterpreted radio message. A German voice had been heard asking: "Wo ist der Abt? Ist er noch im Kloster? (Where is the 'Abt'? Is it still in the monastery?)" Abt is the German abbreviation for Abteilung (section). Unfortunately Abt also means Abbot, to which the conversation actually referred.

Above: To his credit General Mark Clark did not believe that the Germans were using the Abbey for military purposes. He wholeheartedly opposed the act of needless vandalism wrought on one of the great Abbeys of Medieval Europe.



Above: The Allied advance stalled in front of the Gustav line. The only way forward was by a simultaneous flanking manoeuvre with an amphibious landing at Anzio together with a renewed frontal assault on Monte Cassino.

Below: Contrary to popular perception Italy is not all blue skies, sunshine and Chianti. The winters were long and savage. Roads through the mountains were few and were turned to rivers of mud with heavy rain and the weight of traffic passing over them.



rivers Liri and Sacco. To draw off German reserves, a new amphibious landing would be made some 100 km behind the front. To prepare for the main attack, another bitterly contested river crossing had to be made, over the Rapido, but by 10 January, the plans were laid to combine an assault on the Gustav line with a landing at Anzio. The Monte Cassino position would be isolated and Kesselring's men caught between two fires. Alexander and the British hoped to trap a major proportion of the defenders in their positions, but Clark had a different agenda.

WILD CAT TAMED

A Royal Navy captain involved in Operation 'Shingle' noted, "We were briefed for the landing at Anzio. This was going to be the great thing: tanks would go mad on the plains of Rome and cut off the Germans; the Germans would surrender and the bottleneck at Cassino would be broken. The only thing was, the Germans must have had the same briefing..."

Kesselring kept a powerful force in reserve, anticipating an attack from the sea. When it came on 22 January, he reported it as the landing – the expected Allied invasion of western Europe. Whether he believed this, or the initial reports were wildly exaggerated, or the canny Marshal just wanted the reinforcements, Kesselring immediately received panzer and *panzergrenadier* divisions stationed in France. Together with his own mobile reserve, he was able to despatch significant reinforcements to the Cassino front as well as concentrate troops for a major counter-attack at Anzio.

GRASPING THE NETTLE

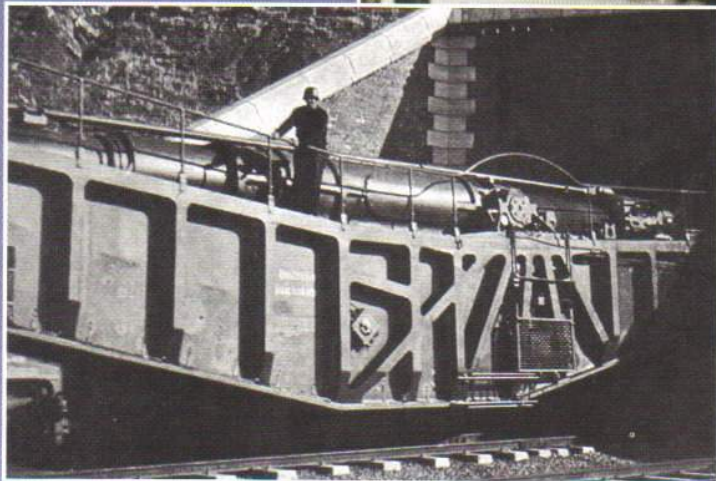
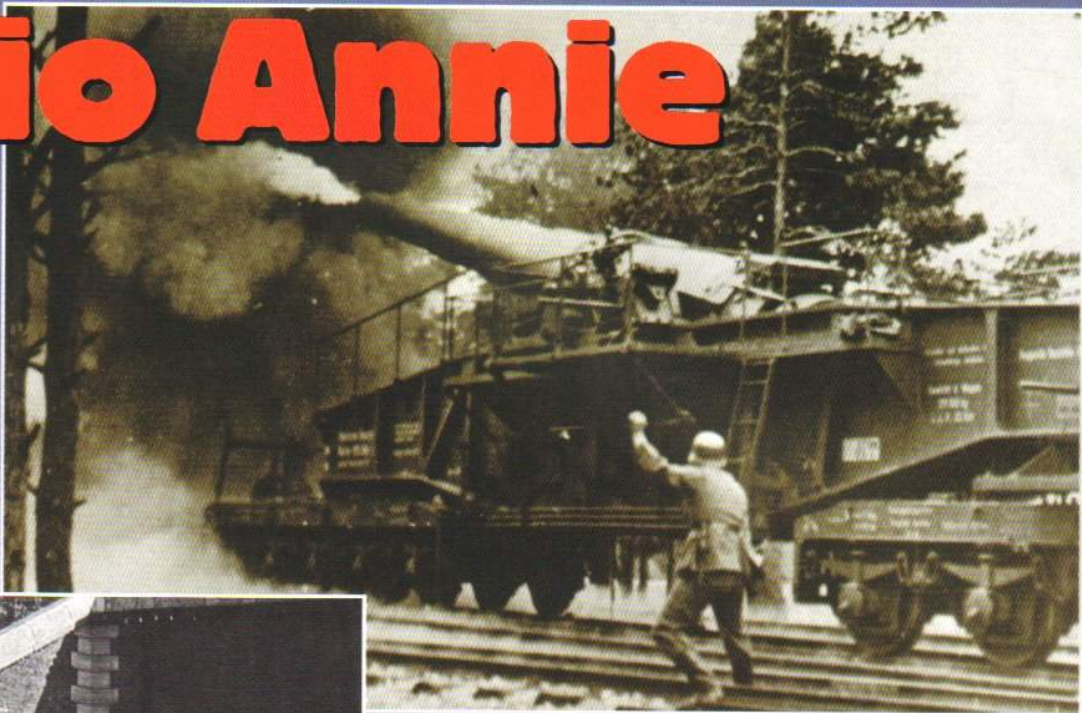
Kesselring thought the landing zone around Anzio could sustain a good four divisions or so, and prepared his counterstroke accordingly. Yet the Allies had only landed two, fearing that it would be difficult to supply a



Anzio Annie

Right: The 28cm Kanone 5 was one of the finest artillery pieces ever produced. It was used extensively from the Atlantic Wall to the siege of Sevastopol. The complete unit weighed in at 218 tonnes and the gun could propel a 255kg shell up to 62km.

Below: A near perfect firing point for the guns was established in a tunnel on the main railway line connecting Rome to Nettuno. Although there were two tracks at the site it was deemed safer to operate only one gun at a time with the other gun kept in another tunnel further to the North. The gun emerged from its excellent cover only to retire again after firing.



IF THE GERMANS were unable to throw the Allies back into the sea as Hitler had demanded, then neither were the Allies able to widen the beachhead established at Anzio. The Germans placed a ring of steel around the Allied positions and attacked them day and night.

Among the ordinance deployed were two railway guns that had originally been sent to Italy for shipment to Tunisia. They were eventually sent south to Anzio from Milan in January 1944. For four months the guns between them made life hell for the entrenched Allies. A constant drizzle of 28cm shells were scattered all over the Allied positions, in concert with an unceasing bombardment from lighter artillery pieces. The guns, known collectively as 'Anzio Annie' remained in action until the breaching of the Gustav line in May 1944. So rapid was the Allied advance after the breakthrough that the escape route of the guns was cut off and they were captured almost intact and ready to move out.

larger force. General Lucas found himself almost unopposed, but contented himself with digging in on a broad front and awaiting events. Within a week, there were four German divisions in the surrounding hills and 2. *Panzerdivision* was on its way to join them. Prodded by his superiors, General Lucas ventured a modest advance on 30 January. German pioneers blew many of the bridges over the Mussolini Canal then 26. *Panzerdivision* and *Panzerdivision Hermann Goering* struck back. Two battalions of US Rangers were ambushed near Cisterna, only 6 men escaping back to the beachhead.

The Germans counter-attacked on 3 February, but the British 1st Division maintained a coherent front at the cost of heavy

casualties. The main German effort came on 16 February, spearheaded by one panzer, two *panzergrenadier* and two infantry divisions. The US 45th and British 56th Divisions bore the brunt of the shock, and thanks to heavy artillery and air support, they were able to hold their perimeter despite terrible casualties. The lavish and timely intervention by sea and air was no accident: Kesselring's plans were known to the Allies in detail thanks to Ultra intelligence. German losses were over 5,000 men that day. General Lucas was sacked on 22 February and it fell to his former deputy, General Truscott to repel the last German effort on 29 February. With the Allies now pouring troops into the beachhead, the prospects of driving them into the sea had

long vanished. The Germans went over to the defensive, ushering in a grisly period of First World War-style trench warfare.

BATTLE FOR CASSINO

The fortified town of Cassino and Monastery Hill that overlooked it stood between Clark's 5th Army, Anzio and Rome. On the night of 11-12 January, the French Expeditionary Corps broke into the German defences in the mountains, reaching as far as Atina. The US 2nd Corps fought to take a series of rocky heights adjacent to Monastery Hill, coming 'within a bare 100 metres of success' according to *Generalleutnant* von Senger und Etterlin whose men still held their ground when the fighting died down on 12 February. On

15 February it was the turn of the British – in fact, 2nd New Zealand division and 4th Indian division. The latter attacked Monastery Hill during the night, but were driven back to their start line with heavy losses. The New Zealanders got into the town, but were ejected by an armoured counter-attack by 15. *Panzergrenadier* Division.

The British assault was preceded by the destruction of the sixth century Benedictine Abbey on Monastery Hill. Many of the treasures inside this priceless historical site had been removed, but several hundred civilian refugees died when British and American bombers attacked at the request of the commander of 4th Indian Division, General Tucker. German propaganda made a predictable

Thin Green Line

German airborne in Italy



AS ITALY STARTED TO WAVER and then collapsed altogether in the autumn of 1943, Hitler was forced to commit more and more troops and material to protect his southern flank. These reinforcements included the 1st and 4th Parachute Divisions, which fought superbly in defence of Italy and the Italian mainland. Since Crete the parachute elite had been relegated purely to fighting as infantry. In Italy their role would remain unchanged.

But of all the *Fallschirmjäger* actions in WORLD WAR 2 it was the battles to hold the monastery of Monte Cassino and the town below it that have entered military folklore. The men of the 1st Parachute Regiment earned the title 'The Green Devils of Cassino' for their performance in a battle which Hitler characterised as "a battle of the First World War fought with weapons of the Second."

Above: The Fallschirmjäger were charged with blunting the Allied spearhead in Italy. Paratroops would arrive in a combat area either through conventional parachute drop or by glider. The Gotha 232 glider (above left) could carry up to 23 troops in cramped conditions.

meal out of this and the controversy would dog Tucker's commander, General Freyberg for years after the war. It took until 1969 for the US government to admit that previous claims to have certain knowledge the abbey was occupied were untrue. However, as David Fraser observed, 'nobody should underestimate the influence of the monastery on the morale of our own troops, none of whom could believe that its brooding presence was of no military significance. And the beliefs of soldiers, even if mistaken, are military realities if the soldiers are to be required to attack and to die.'

DEVILS IN THE ABBEY

The ruins were promptly occupied by 1. *Fallschirmjäger* Division, commanded by 48-year-old Richard 'Arno' Heidrich.

Dubbed 'Green devils' by the Allies, the German paratroops held Cassino against another attack by the New Zealanders on 15 March. The intensive fighting that followed was also distressingly like the Western Front of 1914-18. In the labyrinth of broken masonry, the German positions were protected by interlocking zones of fire. The Allies' advantages in tanks and aircraft availed them little in a war of attrition in which the grenade and machine-gun were the decisive weapons. The 1. *Fallschirmjäger* division held off the New Zealand division, elements of 78th division and at least a brigade of 4th Indian division. General Alexander wrote to Sir Alan Brooke expressing his frank admiration for the German defenders: "I don't think any troops could have stood up to it, except those para boys."

From 11-18 May Monte Cassino was attacked with tremendous dash by the Polish Corps, which suffered 3500 casualties before the 12th Podolski Lancers occupied the top of Monastery Hill and ran up the Polish flag above the ruins of the Abbey. However, French mountain troops had fought their way through the Aurunci mountains, taking Mount Faito and outflanking the position. Already in receipt of orders to withdraw, the 'Green Devils' began to fall back on 17 May, slipping north to fight another day.

THE ROAD TO ROME

Troops had been poured into the Anzio beachhead while the battle raged around Monte Cassino. On 23 May, the US VI Corps broke out of Anzio in overwhelming strength. The German forces in the south might have been cut off

had the American forces obeyed General Alexander's command to strike north-east to Valmontone, but Mark Clark sent them north-west to Rome. He succeeded in his ambition: his US 5th Army was the first Allied formation to capture an enemy capital. He ordered his men to prevent British troops advancing there, authorising the use of force if necessary. His shameless glory-hunting enabled the Germans to extract their 10th Army while Clark's men battered their way through the 'Caesar Line.' US troops entered Rome on 4 June, Clark's publicity triumph being eclipsed within 48 hours by the D-Day landings.

Kesselring ordered his army group to withdraw to the next defensive position, the 'Gothic Line,' covering the approaches to the Po Valley. Above that lay the Alpine passes and the Reich itself.

HITLER'S BATTLES 22



Above: One veteran of the fighting described a typical day under fire. "The sun lost its brightness and an uncanny twilight descended. It was like the end of the world. Comrades were wounded, buried alive, dug out again and buried for a second time. Whole platoons and squads were obliterated by direct hits. Others rushed headlong into the enemy to escape from this hell."

Below: The strains of combat involved in holding Monte Cassino were intense. Here men of the 1st Parachute Division take a few moments rest from the fighting, much of which was at close quarters and often hand-to-hand. Away from the fight living conditions for the defenders, especially in the winter were often difficult.



Below: A Sturmgeschütz III provides support to the embattled defenders at Cassino. The excellent cover provided by the ruins made it virtually impossible to spot German armour in the town's ruins. Strong points backed by panzers were particularly difficult to dislodge.



Above: One of the most fearsome sounds heard on any World War 2 battlefields was the 'tearing linoleum' howl of the rapid-firing German MG42 machine gun.

Below: Generalmajor Richard Heidrich (standing) with Feldmarschall Albert Kesselring in the Italian theatre, mid-1944. Heidrich assumed command of the Cassino sector on 20 February, with Cassino and Monte Cassino being entrusted to Oberst Heilmann's 3rd Parachute Regiment.





GERMAN ROCKETS

The 28cm and 32cm Wurfkörper rockets were awkward, bulky and their poor ballistic shape further decreased their range. But their payload was awesome and if the rocket hit a target the results were catastrophic.

Rocket artillery has a long history dating back to ancient China, but by the start of the twentieth century this type of ordnance had been largely overlooked. In 1941 the Wehrmacht became the first army to reintroduce the weapon – to devastating effect.



ROCKET ARTILLERY dates its origin to the ancient Persians and Greeks. However, the Chinese were the first to use the technology on a wide scale, followed by the Mongols. Rockets reached Europe in the 13th century but were not deployed significantly until the 16th and 17th centuries. Rockets were subsequently used in most conflicts prior to the 20th century but were sidelined by developments in conventional artillery.

Rockets were used in World War I primarily for signaling and were also fired from French aircraft against hydrogen-filled observation balloons. In the 1920s and 1930s however Germany and the Soviet Union began to re-explore the military potential of rocket artillery.

German rocket artillery were widely known to the Allies as 'Moaning Minnies' or 'Screaming Mimis' because of the distinctive howl from the rocket motors of the 15-cm six barrelled projector. This weapon had the more formal title of *Nebelwerfer* or Smoke Projector.

The name was a hangover from World War I, where heavy calibre mortars were employed to lay down smoke or gas. In World War II rocket projectiles could be used to deliver smoke, but more commonly they were employed with high explosive (HE) warheads. In addition to HE, *Nebelwerfer* fills included incendiary liquids and there were huge stocks of rocket projectiles containing lethal chemicals – 18,600 15-cm chemical rockets were captured at H Muna St Georgen in 1945 – though even Hitler did not resort to their use.

'SHOOT AND SCOOT'

The weapon was feared and respected by the Allies for its ability to deliver five or six projectiles simultaneously onto a target. The rockets had a high blast effect and were devastating against troops in the open. For the *Nebeltruppen* – Smoke Troops, the major drawback of

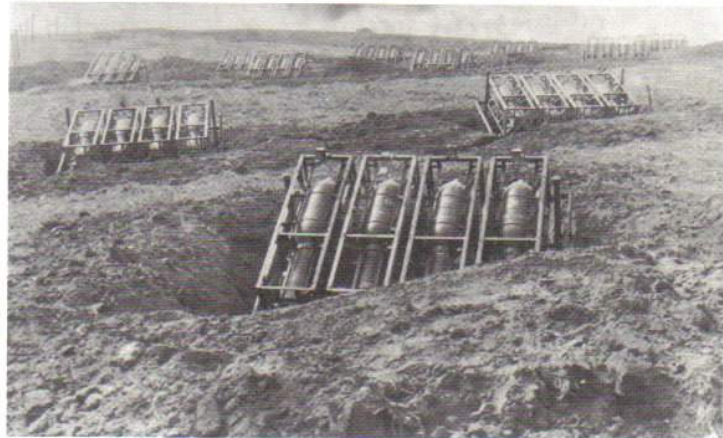
the weapon was its firing signature. Dust was kicked up around the launch site and a long trail of smoke marked the flight of the rocket. This could attract counter battery fire – in the East Soviet forces even responded with their own *Katyusha* rockets. *Nebeltruppen* became expert in 'shoot and scoot' tactics – firing and then hitching up the projectors and moving out of the area very quickly.

Training for *Nebeltruppen* was undertaken at Celle south of Stettin and, as the numbers of regiments increased, at Munster-Nord. The soldiers who operated these specialised weapons wore a distinctive burgundy red *Waffenfarbe* arm colour as piping on their epauletts and forage caps. On the lower left sleeve they had the trade badge of an upright mortar round in white surrounded by a wreath of white oak leaves on a blue-green oval background.

The first rocket equipment, the *Nebelwerfer* 42 with its 28/32-cm rockets, entered service in 1940. It was a comparatively simple towed weapon that arrived too late to see action in the campaign in France. The launcher consisted of a frame that took six 32-cm rockets, while inner rails would take the smaller 28-cm rounds. The 28-cm HE rocket weighed 82 kg and had a maximum range of 1925 metres; the 32-cm



*Above and below: German rocket artillery was not employed during the first blitzkrieg campaigns in the West. This was because most of the *Nebelwerfer* had been assigned to the chemical warfare units. These were being held in reserve to wage gas warfare if the fighting had taken such an horrific turn. Some rocket artillery was released in time for Operation Barbarossa, but large numbers were not deployed until the late summer of 1941 when Russian *Katyushas* rudely awakened the Wehrmacht to the weapon's potential when used in quantity.*



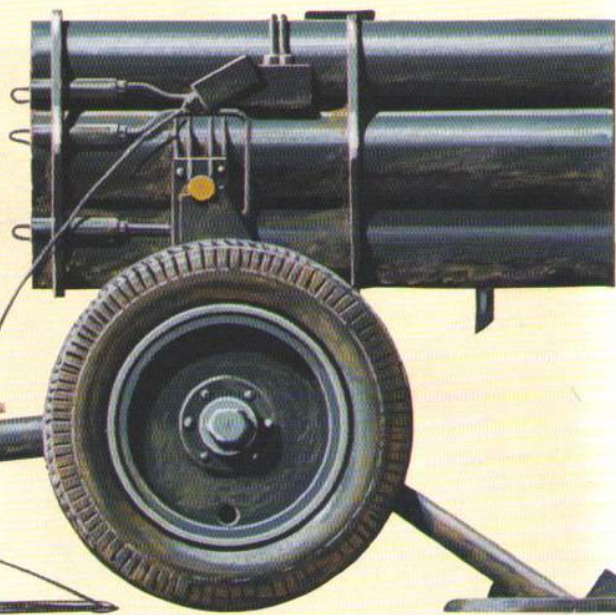
Below: This impressive display of pyrotechnics was photographed on the night of 24 – 25th March 1944 as the British and Americans prepared to cross the Rhine. The western Allies made effective use of rocket artillery, but in much smaller quantities than the Germans and Russians.





"MOANING MINNIE"

The Wehrmacht were the first to use rocket artillery in World War II, though the honour is often wrongly attributed to the Soviets. Four German Army Nebelwefer regiments were among many artillery units that opened fire on 22 June 1941 at 3:15am, beginning Operation Barbarossa. The Red Army used rocket artillery for the first time on 14 July 1941, firing at the rail station at Orsza on the Minsk-Moscow route, which had been captured by Army Group Centre.



GERMAN ROCKET ARTILLERY grew into a formidable weapons system. It was capable of quickly laying great concentrations of smoke, or massed fire across target areas. Besides the enormous blast and destruction wrought on enemy targets, the distinctive screaming sound of the rocket motors loaded additional psychological pressure onto troops on the receiving end of a barrage.

The inherent inaccuracy of rocket projectiles meant that volume of

fire replaced accuracy. The *Nebeltruppen* favoured an approach based on General Guderian's favourite maxim *Klotzen, nicht Kleckern* – "Kick them, don't spit on them."

As the war progressed the Germans employed rockets in preference to conventional. This was for two main reasons: the projectors were easy to handle compared to cannon firing similar warheads, and they were also far easier and cheaper to make.



Above: In comparison with field guns rocket artillery was deficient in range and accuracy. The noise and smoke generated by the flight of the rounds made it relatively easy for an enemy to locate the firing unit.

incendiary rocket of 79 kg, but with a maximum range of only 2200 metres. Though the 28/32-cm NbW 41 rockets were powerful projectiles, their comparatively short range meant that the equipment was not used in large numbers.

RUSSIAN DEBUT

A year on, the *Nebelwerfer* 41 equipped with 15-cm rockets was fielded in Russia. It would be employed throughout the war and would even be used by French forces after 1945.

The rocket was of an unusual design, with the motor in front of the warhead. This was designed to ensure that on impact the motor fragmented. The rocket consisting of seven WASRAG R61 (Diglykol-Dinitrate) propellant sticks ignited by an ERZ.39 initiator vented through 26 angled venturi in a ring about two thirds of the length of the body. The maximum velocity was a slowish but respectable 340 metres a second. The maximum range was 6,900 metres.

The 15-cm rockets were later mounted on the half-track Sd Kfz 4/1 *Maultier* – Mule. However this was a stopgap

until the 15-cm *Panzerwerfer* 42 entered service in 1944. Using the same ten barrelled launcher as the Sd Kfz 4/1 *Maultier* the *Panzerwerfer* 42 used the *Schwerer Wehrmachtschlepper* chassis and could carry 26 rockets internally and ten in the projector. These vehicle-mounted projectors were grouped in independent armoured companies – *Panzerwerferbatterie*, composed of two platoons each with four projectors.

HUGE PAYLOAD

The 21-cm *Nebelwerfer* 42 was trialled in 1942 and entered service in 1943. It was essentially an expanded version of the 15-cm NbW 41, with five larger barrels mounted on the same carriage. To fire, a 0.3-amp current was sent down a six core cable using a hand generator via a junction box on the right hand side of the projector. The *Nebelwerfer* 42 fired only HE ammunition. The rocket weighed 112.6 kg at launch had a velocity of 320 metres a second and a maximum range of 7,850 metres. The rate of fire was five rockets in eight seconds and three salvos of five rockets in five minutes.

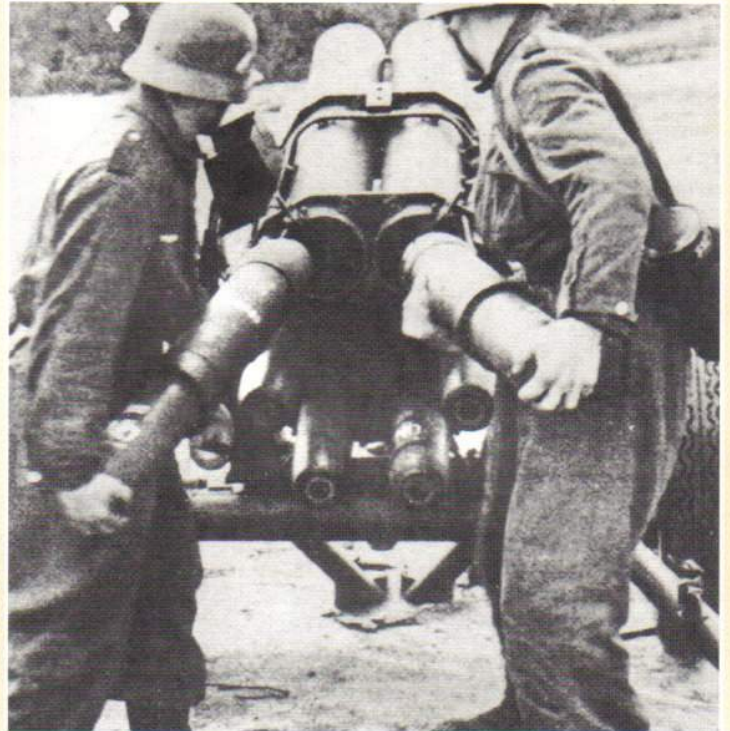


The carriage weighed 1100 kg in travelling mode. The rockets weighed 127 kg, and had a maximum velocity of 230 metres a second after launch and a maximum range of 4,550 metres. The rate of fire was six rockets in ten seconds and two salvos of six rockets in five minutes.

The 30-cm *Raketenwerfer 56* that was introduced into service in 1944 used the carriage of a 5-cm Pak 38. By fitting special liners to the launch rails it could also fire 15-cm ammunition. The system weighed 1004 kg in travelling mode and had a rate of fire of six rockets in ten seconds and two salvos of six in five minutes.

PACKING CRATE LAUNCH

The 28-cm, 30-cm and 32-cm rockets were delivered to front line units in *Packkisten* – simple open frame packing crates and with some modifications these became very effective one shot launchers. The simplest field rocket launcher was the *schweres Wurfgerät 40* that consisted of six crates for 28/32 missiles fixed to a frame that could be adjusted from +10° to +45°. This mounting gave the missiles a maximum range of 2200 metres from the



Above: Crews used a simple open site to aim this highly inaccurate weapon. The 15-cm and 21-cm projectors were provided with traversing and elevating gears, powered electrically.

Above right: HE, smoke or a mixture of the two would then be loaded into the five firing tubes. This procedure would take around two minutes for a practiced crew.

Right: After loading the crew retired to slit trenches 10 to 15 metres away. The rockets were fired by remote control using a hand generator. Electric pulses were sent along a cable to a plug and socket on the right of the mounting. The rockets were fired in two-second intervals that could be judged by the firer since one turn of the firing handle fired one rocket. The sequential firing was to prevent the weapon from being overturned by the rocket's blast.





M4 Sherman tanks launch a broadside from their T-34 60-tube launcher known as Calliope. The tubes were manufactured of plywood and could only be used a few times before disintegrating. The launcher nonetheless provided tank units with awesome close-range firepower.



The mounting of rocket artillery on to a self-propelled platform not only provided an armoured gun-platform for the crew but allowed the weapon to be removed from its firing position at great speed. The rockets could be reloaded in under a minute. Most units saw service with the Waffen-SS.

32-cm and 1925 metres for the 28-cm. Four rockets could be fired in six seconds using this system. First used operationally on the Eastern Front in 1941 it was nicknamed the *Stuka zu Fuss* – Stuka on Foot or Ground Stuka.

'HOWLING COW'

The *schweres Wurfgerät 41* differed from the sWG 40 by being constructed from a tubular steel framework that weighed 110 kg and could launch the 28/32-cm and 30-cm rockets from their crates. Elevation was from +10° to +45° and rockets could be mounted singly or in banks of four that could be fired in six seconds. This too was known as the *Stuka zu Fuss*, though the sWG 41 was sometimes called the *Heulende Kuh* – the Howling Cow.

The most successful mobile launcher for 28/32-cm and 30-cm rockets was the *schwere Wurfrahmen 40*. This was a metal framework fitted over and along the sides of an SdKfz 251 armoured half track vehicle. Designed by J. Gast KG of Berlin in 1940, it entered service that year. The frames holding the *Packkisten* could be elevated

from +14° to +50° and six rockets could be launched from their crates in ten seconds. In action the rockets were not loaded onto the sWR 40 until the moment of launch because this made the vehicle too wide. Normally the load consisted of five 28-cm rockets and one 32-cm incendiary rocket.

The vehicle was aimed at the target, brakes applied, rockets bolted at the correct angle and the crew retired ten metres. The rockets fired in a staggered succession starting with the left rear through to the right front.

ORGAN MUSIC

There were three types of rocket unit within the German Army: the *Werferabteilung (Mot)* – Rocket Projector Brigade (Motorised) – equipped with the 15-cm *Nebelwerfer 41*; the *schwere Werferabteilung (Mot)* or Heavy Rocket Projector Brigade (Motorised), equipped with either the 21-cm *Nebelwerfer 42* or the 28/32-cm *Nebelwerfer 42* or 56; and the *Gebirgswerferabteilung* – Mountain Rocket Projector Unit.

The *Werferabteilung (Mot)* consisted of a unit staff and staff battery and up to three batteries

each with six projectors. The staff was composed of the *Abteilung* Headquarters, Reconnaissance/observation platoon, Survey section, Maintenance unit, Administrative staff and Signals staff. For local defence an anti-tank unit armed with either four 3.7-cm or 7.5-cm Pak was attached. It had 14 officers, 101 NCOs and 440 soldiers with 109 motor vehicles and nine motor cycles. In action a 15-cm *Werferabteilung* was supposed to cover a front of 1,200 metres, though in practice with each battery covering 200 metres it was usually 800 – 900 metres. A 15-cm *Werferabteilung* carried 1728 HE rounds and 432 smoke. Each battery thus had 432 HE and 108 smoke.

The *Abteilung* were linked together to form a *Werfer-regimenter*. This normally comprised a Regimental HQ or HQ battery, two 15-cm *Abteilung*, one 21-cm *Abteilung* and a light projector column (usually a 15-cm detachment) for special tasks. A regiment had 1,876 personnel, 12 anti-tank guns, 54 rocket projectors, 374 motor vehicles and 37 motor cycles.

A *schweres Regiment* was

one in which more than one *Abteilung* was equipped with the 21-cm *Nebelwerfer 42* or larger. The normal establishment for one of these heavy units was two 21-cm or 28/32-cm (later 30-cm) *Abteilung* and one 15-cm *Abteilung*. The *schwere Werferabteilung (Mot)* 21-cm carried 900 HE rounds – ten salvos or 180 for each battery. The 30-cm projector battery carried 600 HE enough for three salvos. The 28/32-cm battery carried 450 28-cm HE and 150 32-cm Incendiary rounds.

HALF-TRACK SUPPORT

Both the 15-cm and 21-cm equipped *Abteilung* were supported by the *Nebelkraftwagen* (Sd Kfz 11/1) half track vehicle that carried the launcher crew and, in interchangeable stowage bins along the side, either 36 15-cm rockets or ten 21-cm rockets.

The *Gebirgswerferabteilung* equipped with the 10-cm *Nebelwerfer 35* and 40 carried 1899 HE and 1269 smoke rounds. The *Nebelwerfer 35* and 40 were mortars with a range respectively of 3,025 and 6,350 metres. However mountain



The most widely used rockets in WORLD WAR 2 were the Russian 'Katyushas.' Generally mounted on trucks, they provided the Soviet Army with awesome fire power. Because of the distinctive moaning sound made by the missiles in flight, the Germans dubbed the weapon 'Stalin's organ'.



troops in operations in the Caucasus in 1942 deployed standard rocket equipment.

By the autumn of 1944 manpower shortages had led to *Werferregimenter* being reduced to two *Abteilungen*, and though nominally motorised the projectors were often towed into action by horses.

SHOCK WAVE

The *Werferregimenter* and smaller units were not normally part of any Army divisional establishment but were allotted to the various armies, corps and divisions by the OKH. Only the *Waffen-SS* Panzer Divisions had organic *Werferabteilung* each equipped with 18 projectors.

The *Waffen-SS* even copied the Soviet *Katyusha*. They produced the 8-cm *Raketen-Vielfachwerfer*, a 24-rail launcher mounted on an ex-French Army *Somua* half track that fired a 6.9 kg fin stabilised rocket. In trials early in 1944 it was established that the 8-cm rocket was superior to the 15-cm. However this conclusion may have been biased by political pressure.

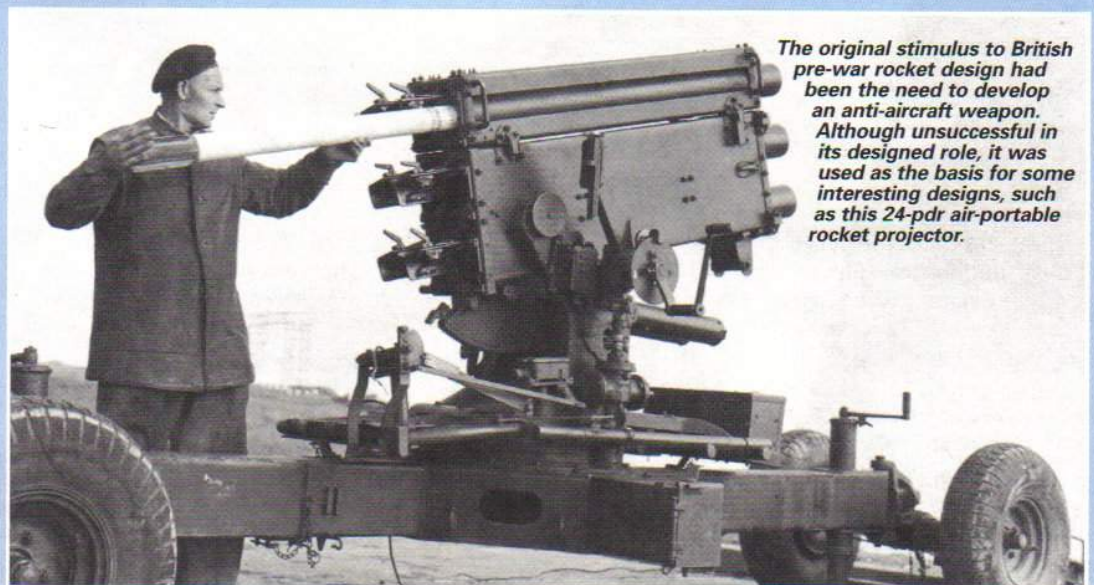
ROCKET DUEL

NEARLY ALL THE MAJOR protagonists in World War II made operational use of rockets to some degree. They were mainly used to supplement existing weapons, but the Soviets soon discovered that the rocket could at times be regarded as a weapon in its own right.

Technologically the Germans were the most advanced, but they used rockets only in a supporting role to flesh out artillery barrages.

The Red Army used rockets in the forefront of every offensive to repel the Germans from its soil. Some of the Soviet rocket types were still in service all over the world until the mid 1980s.

The rocket was capable of swinging the balance on the battlefield, and did just that in the Eastern conflict. In the west the British and Americans occasionally used them to devastating effect to reduce bunkers and strongpoints.



The original stimulus to British pre-war rocket design had been the need to develop an anti-aircraft weapon. Although unsuccessful in its designed role, it was used as the basis for some interesting designs, such as this 24-pdr air-portable rocket projector.



SCHUTZSTAFFEL PERSONALITIES



A personally-dedicated photograph of Arthur Seyss-Inquart, a leading Austrian Nazi who gained notoriety as the Reich governor of the Netherlands between 1942 and 1945.

Handwritten German text on a card placed over the bottom right of the photograph:
 Frau Seyss-Inquart, meine Erinnerung an die Tage
 meines Lebens in der Reichsregierung
 für Sie, die ich 1942-1945
 gelebt habe.



PERSONAL ITEMS with SS connections are among the most sought-after by collectors of militaria.

A surprising amount survived the war – though a vastly greater quantity of forgeries and reproductions make the business of collecting such items something of a minefield.

Sources for such material vary. A great deal found its way into the hands of the Allied soldiers who occupied Germany at the end of the war, often gathering dust in lofts and cellars until sold many years later. A smaller amount reached the market from the original owners or recipients of awards – those who survived the war crimes trials and de-Nazification processes of the 1940s and 1950s, and who needed ready cash. More came from members of their families.

MAJOR LOAD

High demand and high prices make collecting SS memorabilia a task which should not be undertaken lightly. Knowledge is vital, whether gained from years of handling such items or from extensive research – though even the most knowledgeable of collectors can occasionally get taken in. Good reference material makes the task easier, and as with all antique collecting a believable and verified provenance provides the best security, as does dealing with reputable suppliers.

Above right: The unique collar patch worn by Heinrich Himmler as Reichsführer-SS. He adopted the design in 1934 after the final separation of the SA and the SS, and it continued unchanged until the end of the Third Reich.

Right: A Parade medal set worn by SS-Obergruppenführer August Frank, one of the few items left in his possession after his home was searched for war booty by American soldiers. Frank was a former police president who became a close associate of SS industrial overlord Oswald Pohl.





Above: The SS 'leader' Ausweis or identity card of SS-Oberführer Benno Martin. Martin, who was to rise to the rank of Obergruppenführer, was Höhere SS und Polizei Führer at Nuremberg between 1941 and the end of the war. The Pope was a character witness at Martin's war crimes trial, saying that the senior SS officer had saved Nuremberg cathedral from destruction.

Below: Knight's Cross of the War Merit Cross with swords, awarded to SS-Obergruppenführer Oswald Pohl, head of the SS economics organisation. Pohl lost his medals when in custody after the war. They were acquired by the warden of the jail in which he was imprisoned, Richard G. Raabe. These and many other such items were kept by Raabe until 1991, when he sold them. The sale, which included a similar Knight's Cross awarded to SS-Obergruppenführer Gottlob Berger, aroused great interest among collectors of Nazi memorabilia.



Above: Tailored, open-necked tunic which once belonged to Obergruppenführer Oswald Pohl. Many of Pohl's uniforms survived the war, being kept by his wife who sold them to a local theatrical company. This example was acquired in the 1950s by military historian Andrew Mollo. The tunic bears the Party Badge in Gold, the SA Sports Badge in Bronze, and the Iron Cross First Class from the First World War.



Left: Collar patch and epaulet for the rank of SS-Obergruppenführer belonging to Reichsleiter Martin Bormann. Although strictly a Party official, Bormann was one of the most influential men in Hitler's immediate circle, and was given high SS rank. These examples were taken by occupying American troops from a white summer uniform Bormann had left in his house on the Obersalzberg.

NAZI SYMBOLS

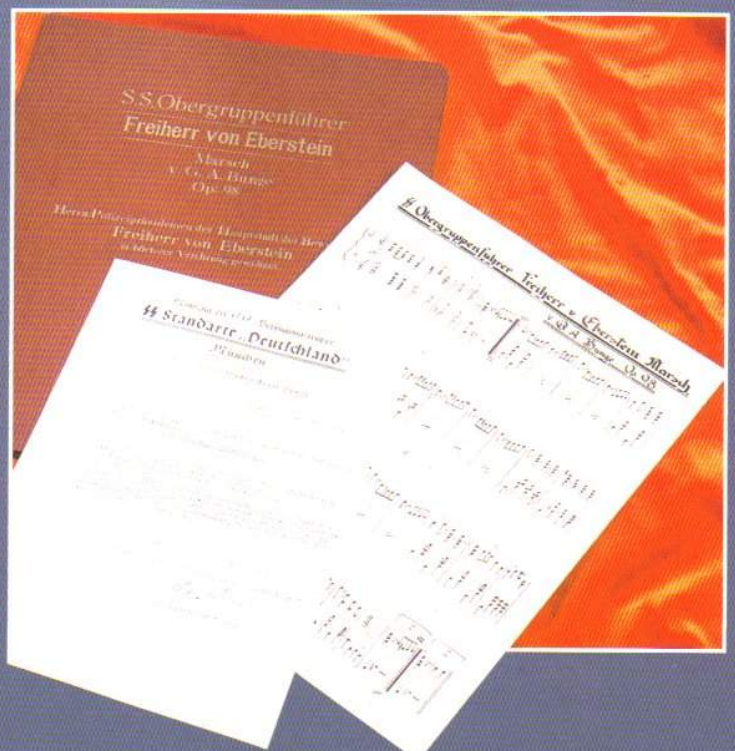
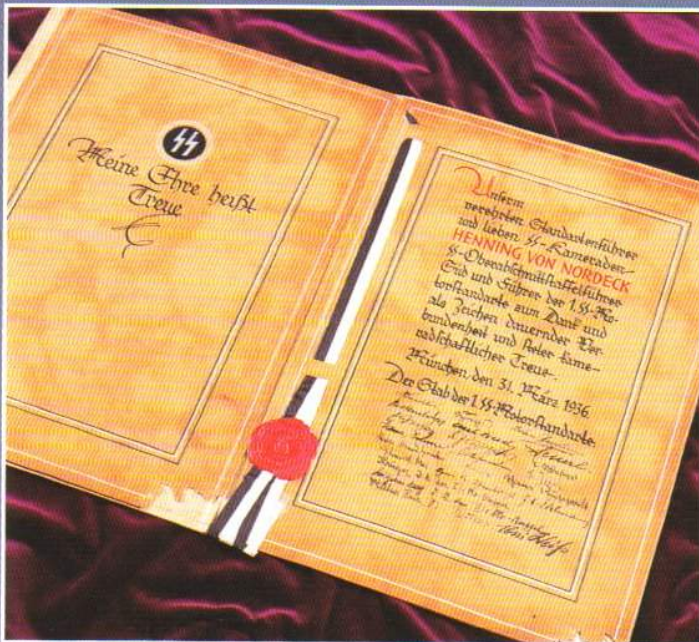


Left: The Golden Party Badge and Citation belonging to SS-Obergruppenführer Karl Freiherr von Eberstein, a long-time associate of Himmler's. Eberstein was Höhere SS und Polizei Führer Süd in Munich from April 1938 until the last months of the war. On the orders of Martin Bormann he was dismissed from his post in February 1945, charged with defeatism.

Above: Eberstein had served as an artilleryman during the First World War. This group of mementoes of his army service includes epaulettes from both the 17th and 75th Field Artillery regiments, together with two of his pocket diaries and a personalised clothing name tag. Eberstein was a family friend of the Heydrichs, and introduced Reinhard Heydrich to Himmler.

MEMORIES OF SERVICE

Below: This hand-made parchment presentation folder was given to SS-Standartenführer Henning von Nordeck by his personal staff in 1936. Nordeck was commander of the 1st SS-Motorstandarte or regiment. Motorstandarte were units of the Allgemeine-SS rather than the armed units which were to become the Waffen-SS. Nordeck later joined the Luftwaffe and rose to the rank of Oberstleutnant.



Below: Once the NSDAP came to power, senior Nazis like von Eberstein were treated in much the same way that aristocrats had been in days gone by. Eberstein even had a march composed in his honour. It was written by Gustav Adolf Bunge, Professor of Music in Munich and Director of Music for the SS-Standarte Deutschland. The unit was eventually to become part of the Das Reich Division.

A-Z

OF THE THIRD REICH

SA (*Sturmabteilung*)

The *Sturmabteilung* or 'Storm Detachment' took its name from German trench raiding troops of World War I. The original SA members were selected to provide security for NSDAP meetings, and to break the heads of the Party's enemies. The group initially attracted right wing, nationalist former soldiers.

Unemployment in the 30s increased its ranks – by 1931 the SA had 100,000 members and within a year this had grown to 400,000.

Once the Nazis came to power there was conflict between Hitler

and the SA leader, Ernst Röhm. Hitler had been quite willing to use the brawling brownshirts on his way to power. Röhm wanted more – he saw the SA becoming Germany's new revolutionary army. When Hitler came to power in 1933 the SA took on the functions of an auxiliary police force.

However Röhm's ambitions led conflict with Hitler and the Army, and in the Night of the Long Knives on 30 June 1934, Röhm and other senior members of the SA were killed by squads from the SS. The result was a decline

in the importance of the SA, which though it existed up to 1945 had no real role in the running of the Third Reich. Its status was so insignificant that it was not proscribed as a criminal organisation at the Nuremberg Tribunal in 1945.

Right: SA Felzeichen or standards are paraded through the streets of Nuremberg. One of the Sturmabteilung's early functions was to give the NSDAP an impressive ceremonial presence.

See also Inside the Third Reich
Issue 5: Rise of the SA



Sachsenhausen

One of the three main camps in the pre-war German penal system, along with Dachau and Buchenwald. Established in 1937, it was located to the north of Berlin where it absorbed the nearby Oranienburg camp. Originally intended to house 8,000 prisoners, by the end of the war the main camp had over 35,000 inmates, and 135,000 prisoners had passed through.

Sachsenhausen was used to house VIP prisoners like the

former Austrian Chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg and the industrialist Fritz Thyssen. It became the hub of a vast slave labour network, and some of its inmates were used in medical experiments.

Sachsenhausen was liberated by the Red Army on 22 April 1945 though most inmates had been marched west by their guards. Survivors were finally liberated by Allied troops at Schwerin.

The camp commandants were Hermann Baranowski (died 1939),

Hans Loritz (committed suicide in 1946 while in the Neumünster internment camp), Walter Eisfeld (died 1940) and Anton Kaindl (sentenced to life imprisonment by a Soviet military court – he died in the USSR).

Right: Prisoners build new SS housing at Sachsenhausen soon after the camp was opened in 1937. Inmate population grew slowly, each group of arriving prisoners being used to extend the camp until it reached full size.



Sanitätsdienstgefreiter – SDG

The Deputy Health Service Corporal was the concentration camp NCO responsible for exterminating inmates in gas chambers. Stocks of Zyklon B poison gas were brought into the camps in ambulances. At Auschwitz, the SDG along with an

SS officer carried the green metal poison canisters to the short concrete pipes that projected every 30 metres from the roof of the subterranean gas chambers. Putting on a respirator, the SDG lifted the concrete cover on the pipe, opened one of the

containers and poured the blue crystals into the vent. The crystals turned into hydrocyanic or prussic acid fumes. According to Rudolf Hoess, the commandant of Auschwitz, it took about five minutes to kill everyone in the chamber. Other eyewitnesses

thought it took longer; up to 15 minutes for those furthest from the gas. The officer waited a further five minutes and then departed in the ambulance.

See also Inside the Third Reich
Issue 2: Body Factories

Sauckel, Fritz (1894 – 1946)

Ernst Friederich Christoph 'Fritz' Sauckel was born at Hassfurt am Main. As a young man he went to sea, serving on German, Norwegian and Swedish ships before and during World War I. Captured early in the conflict, he spent nearly five years in a French POW camp.

Sauckel joined the Nazi Party in its early days as member number 1395, becoming *Gauleiter* of Thuringia. He was father of ten children, two of whom were to die in action in World War II.

In 1942 Sauckel was appointed Plenipotentiary for Labour, and administered the slave labour programme that imported over five million men and women into the Reich. Most lived in squalid conditions and were subject to appalling brutality. Sauckel was indicted at Nuremberg but he asserted innocence of the excesses of the Third Reich, saying in effect that he ran a job agency that supplied staff and labourers to Speer's war industries. Found guilty of war

crimes, he was hanged on 16 October 1946. Looking around the execution chamber he said, "I am dying innocent. The sentence is wrong. God protect Germany and make her great again! God protect my family!"

Right: Described by writer Eugene Davidson as "The greatest slavemaster of all time," Fritz Sauckel once boasted that only one in twenty of the ten million or more foreign workers and POWs who arrived in Germany during WWII had come voluntarily.



Schacht, Dr Hjalmar (Horace Greely) (1877 - 1970)

Economist of international reputation and president of the *Reichsbank*, Hjalmar Schacht was born on 22 January 1877 in Tingleff, Schleswig, (now Tinglev, Denmark). Brought up in the USA, he returned to Germany to complete his studies. During World War I he was a member of the economic section of the occupation authorities in Belgium. He became president of the *Reichsbank* between 1923-29 and cured the runaway inflation that had dogged Germany.

Schacht's opposition to the Versailles war reparations drew him to the Nazi Party. He recruited bankers and industrialists to back the NSDAP and in 1933 was

re-appointed to the presidency of the *Reichsbank*. As Minister of Economics he invented financial devices to conceal and limit the inflation resulting from the re-armament programme. As the character of the Nazi government became obvious he resigned as Minister for Economics and Plenipotentiary General for the War Economy in 1937.

Following the July 1944 Plot he was arrested and held in three concentration camps on suspicion of involvement with the Resistance. He was acquitted at the Nuremberg tribunal, where it was established he had the highest IQ of all the defendants.

Schacht faced several German courts in the late 40s and early 50s before he resumed a banking career. He was an advisor to Colonel Nasser in Egypt in the 1950s and founded the private banking house of Schacht & Co in Düsseldorf. He died in Munich on 3 June 1970.

Right: The tall and cultured Hjalmar Schacht separated from his rabidly Nazi wife in 1938. Once she informed the Party hierarchy of his dislike for the NSDAP and its programmes, he was never again trusted by them.

See also Secret Hitler Files

Issue 7: Hitler's Backers



Schar

German word meaning band, or company or group. It was adopted by the NSDAP as the name of a troop of eight to ten men in the Party's paramilitary

formations, including the *Sturmabteilung* or SA, the *Schutzstaffel* or SS, the NS *Kraftfahr Korps* or NSKK and the NS *Flieger Korps* or NSFK.

SS Ranks derived from the name include *Unterscharführer* (Corporal); *Scharführer* (Sergeant); *Oberscharführer* (Staff Sergeant) and *Hauptscharführer*

(Sergeant Major). Other NSDAP formations only used the first two, the more senior non-commissioned ranks being designated *Truppführer*.

Schellenberg, Walter (1910 - 1952)

Born in Saarbrücken on 16 January 1910 Walter Schellenberg was one of the 'Intellectual Thugs' recruited by Heydrich. Graduating in law he joined the NSDAP and the SS in 1933, working in the SS security service from 1934. He was a key player in the Venlo incident in November 1939, when two British Intelligence agents were kidnapped in then-neutral Holland. He also drafted the SS arrest list which would have been used in the United Kingdom had an invasion taken place.

In 1941 he was promoted to SS

Brigadeführer and head of Amt VI the Foreign Intelligence Service. His attempt to kidnap the Duke and Duchess of Windsor from Portugal ended in failure. He had informal contacts with Swiss intelligence in an attempt to penetrate the Lucy spy ring – the ring was a cover for Ultra intelligence that was passed to the USSR. In the final years of the Third Reich he urged Himmler to negotiate with Swedish Count Folke Bernadotte of Wisborg on the surrender of the German Army to the Western Allies.

In May 1945 he fled to Sweden

but was extradited back to Germany. He was tried by the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg and was sentenced to six years in prison. Released in 1950 due to ill health, he settled in Italy and died in 1952.

Right: Walter Schellenberg was an intimate associate of both Himmler and Heydrich, and but for his youth would probably have been appointed head of the RSHA on the latter's death.

See also Inside the Third Reich

Issue 18: Sicherheitsdienst



Schirach, Baldur von (1907 - 1974)

Born in Berlin on 9 March 1907 Baldur von Schirach had an American mother and a father who had served in the Imperial Army before going into the theatre.

At the age of 17 in 1924 Baldur von Schirach went to Munich to study art history and German folklore. He was drawn into politics and the NSDAP and in 1931 became the leader of the *National-sozialistischer Deutscher Studentbund* (National Socialist Association of German Students).

In 1931 he became the leader of the *Hitlerjugend* and held the position and the grand title of *Reichsjugendführer* until 1940. One of Hitler's inner circle and a

regular visitor to Berchtesgaden, he married Henriette Hoffmann, the daughter of Hitler's court photographer. Schirach was passionately loyal to Hitler. His habit of writing rather gushing poetry in praise of the Führer earned him the reputation of the Nazi party's poet laureate. A rather plump man, von Schirach was ridiculed by the tough South Germans who held many of the key posts in the Nazi government.

In 1940 Von Schirach left the HJ to join the elite *Gross-deutschland* regiment. He served for a short time before becoming *Gauleiter* of Vienna, where he expedited the deportation of Austria's Jews.

He retained his party rank even after falling out with Hitler. The break occurred when Henriette complained to the Führer about the treatment of the Dutch Jews. The couple were never invited to Berchtesgaden again.

At Nuremberg, Schirach was convicted of Crimes against Humanity, and served 20 years in Spandau Prison.

Right: Baldur von Schirach was one of the few Nazis who admitted to any guilt at Nuremberg, though he insisted he knew nothing of the Holocaust.

See also Hitler's Henchmen

Issue 18: Von Schirach



A-Z OF THE THIRD REICH

Schmeling, Max (1905 -)

Germany's most successful boxer, Schmeling was born in Brandenburg on 28 September 1905. He won the German and European light-heavyweight championships before beating Jack Sharkey on a foul for the world heavyweight title in New York on 12 June 1930. Schmeling was defeated in a 1932 return match with Sharkey.

In June 1936 he knocked out an overweight and unfit Joe Louis, being hailed by the Nazis as a triumph of the Aryan over the African. In a rematch with

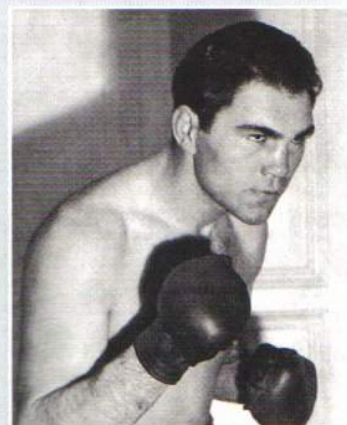
Schmeling in 1938 Louis, by now champion and in peak condition, knocked out his German opponent in two minutes four seconds in the first round.

Already a national hero, Schmeling was even more idolised by the Nazi press when he enlisted in the airborne forces and parachuted into Crete. He was awarded the Iron Cross Second Class for his 'wounds' but it later emerged that he had been hospitalised for diarrhoea.

He attempted a comeback after the war, his last bout being in

1948. He won 56 out of 70 professional fights, 39 by knockouts. Schmeling then became a successful businessman, owning the Coca-Cola franchise in Hamburg. He was still alive and active in his 95th year, living in Germany, running a charity and staying fit with a daily half-hour work out.

Right: Max Schmeling was the most successful boxer in German history. He became a symbol of 'Aryan' superiority, although his personal views were more liberal.



Scholl, Hans and Sophie (1918 - 1943, 1921 - 1943)

Hans and Sophie Scholl were members of the University of Munich opposition movement known as *Weisse Rose* or 'White Rose.' Some of group who were studying medicine were drafted into the Wehrmacht during the summer vacations. They returned having seen the crimes being committed in Germany's name.

Leaflets attacking the Nazi government and its crimes were circulated secretly in towns in central Germany. On 18 February 1943 the Scholls publicly distributed leaflets at the University. They were reported

and arrested. Four days later, along with their friend Christopher Probst, they were found guilty of treason by the People's Court under Roland Freisler. They were guillotined at the Stadelheim prison.

Right: Hans Scholl (seen here on leave from the front) and his sister Sophie were leaders of one of the few German groups openly hostile to Nazi rule. They paid for that opposition with their lives.

See also Inside the Third Reich
Issue 20: Opposition to Hitler



Scholtz-Klink, Gertrud (1902 -)

Born in Adelsheim, Gertrud Scholtz-Klink joined the NSDAP in 1928. She became leader of the Baden *Nationalsozialistische Frauenschaft* - the NS Women's Group - in 1931. In 1934 she was appointed *Reichsführerin* in succession to Elisabeth Zander and Gertrud Bäumer.

The purpose of NSF was to ensure that members brought up their families as patriots and believers in the precepts and orders of Adolf Hitler. As head of

the NSF she also headed the *Frauenwerk*, the Women's League of the Red Cross, the Women's Bureau in the *Deutsche Arbeitsfront* and the Woman's Labour service. As the mother of ten children Scholtz-Klink exemplified the values favoured by the Nazis. Her second husband was *SS-Obergruppenführer* August Heissmeyer.

In 1945 she went into hiding. When she was captured in 1948 she was acquitted of war crimes.

However in 1950 she was classed as a 'major offender' by the West German government and lost her civil rights.

In 1978 she published *Die Frau im Dritten Reich* - Women in the Third Reich - which indicated that she was still a believer in central ideas of National Socialism.

Right: Gertrude Scholtz-Klink and her second husband August Heissmeyer sit surrounded by her children. She was regarded as an ideal German and Nazi mother.



Schörner, Field Marshal Ferdinand (1892 - 1973)

Ferdinand Schörner was born to a working class Munich family. Commissioned and awarded the *Pour le Mérite* during World War I he remained in the *Reichswehr* after the war. As a Lieutenant he helped suppress the Munich Beer-Hall Putsch. Later he became a loyal supporter of Hitler. In 1942 and 1943 he commanded a Mountain Corps in Lapland, and a Panzer Corps in southern Russia in 1944. In April 1944 he was made commander of Army Group North and on 16 January 1945

supreme commander of the Central Zone, including Berlin, in the rank of Field Marshal. Schörner was notorious for his brutal measures to keep the front line intact, including drum-head courts which led to the death of thousands of soldiers. His slogan became "Hold the line at all costs." Arrested by the US Army in May 1945 he was handed over to the Russians who imprisoned him for ten years. In 1957 a German court sentenced him to four and a half years in prison for manslaughter - he had ordered

the execution of a corporal who was found drunk at the wheel of an army truck. He was released in 1960 suffering from poor health and died in Munich on 6 July 1973 aged 81.

Right: Ferdinand Schörner was anything but a traditional Prussian officer. This, together with his lack of culture and brutal leadership style commended the Bavarian mountain specialist to Hitler. He became one of the Führer's favourite Generals, the last German army commander to be promoted Field Marshal.



Schwarze Korps, Das (The Black Corps)

The official weekly newspaper of the SS which served as a mouthpiece for Heinrich Himmler. Founded in 1935 by Max Amann and edited by Gunther d'Alquen, it reflected the *Reichsführer's* opinions – by turns fantastic, censorious, and puritanical.

The paper's criticisms ranged from threatening companies that had not appointed Nazis to directorships, effectively blackmailing them, to attacking modern jazz for "promoting the wiggling of one's hips like a

lustful homosexual." It called for the dissolution of student fraternities after printing a report that members of the *Korps Saxo-Borussia* at a Heidelberg inn had questioned Hitler's understanding of the proper method of eating asparagus. Intellectuals were a particular butt because of their mania for self-improvement, desire for status and reluctance to father large families.

During the war *Das Schwarze Korps* covered German victories and as the war swung against

Germany concentrated on sustaining morale. Because of its privileged position it was the only publication able to criticise corruption within the Party, and its demand that black marketeers be "shortened by a head" – guillotined – struck an approving chord with the general public.

Right: *Das Schwarze Korps'* circulation rose from 200,000 per week in 1935 to more than 750,000 by the autumn of 1944. It claimed to be 'the Guardian of National Socialist Doctrine'



Sicherheitsdienst

The intelligence branch of the SS, universally known by the initials SD. Founded by Heinrich Himmler in 1931 and led by Reinhard Heydrich the SD took over all other Party intelligence organisations in March 1934. With the establishment of the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (RSHA or Reich Central Security Office) in September 1939 the SD merged with the *Sicherheitspolizei* or Security Police, the *Kriminalpolizei* or plain-clothes criminal police, and the Gestapo. Although not a large

organisation, the SD operated a huge network of informers to spy on the German population, in the process monitoring the true state of public opinion which was reported to the senior members of the Nazi Hierarchy. But the SD's primary mission was to root out enemies of the state. Under Heydrich, chosen lawyers were quick to give a legal gloss to the arbitrary acts of the SD. Another responsibility was foreign intelligence. It was in competition with the *Abwehr*, absorbing the rival military intelligence service

in 1944 after the July Plot.

As the intelligence arm of the NSDAP the SD was declared a criminal organisation at Nuremberg. Even honorary membership of the SD was classed as a crime.

Right: The simple black diamond-shaped arm badge embroidered with the equally simple letters 'SD' was one of the most feared symbols of the Third Reich.



See also Inside the Third Reich Issue 3: Gestapo

Seelöwe, Fall

'Operation Sealion' was the proposed German amphibious operation against Britain in 1940. The high command had never seriously considered that they might be required to invade the British Isles, so plans were hastily prepared after the fall of France.

The German Navy proposed two major landing zones, between Dover and Rye and between Brighton and Chichester with a supporting landing near Weymouth. This was simplified, with the landings being concentrated on beaches around Newhaven, Eastbourne, Hastings, Rye, Lydd and Hythe. The initial

phase would be to secure the South Downs, the second would see the 9th and 16th Armies reaching a line running from Portsmouth to Gravesend while the third stage would have been for the 16th Army to isolate London, while the 9th pushed north and west towards Oxford and Gloucester.

Shipping was assembled, and large barges converted into landing craft. But the Luftwaffe failed to win control of the skies, which would have allowed them to then attack the Royal Navy – the major threat to an invasion fleet. The inability to neutralise

Britain's fleet led to the postponement of *Seelöwe* in September and finally its abandonment in 1941 as Hitler turned his attention eastwards.

Right: Hermann Goering stands with his staff on the Pas de Calais in the summer of 1940. If Operation Sealion was to go ahead, Goering's Luftwaffe needed to gain control of the air over the English Channel. Without control, the German navy could never hope to counter the overwhelming power of the Royal Navy, and the invasion force could never be ferried across the channel safely.



Seyss-Inquart, Artur (1892 - 1946)

Austrian lawyer, National Socialist politician and later Reich Commissioner for the Netherlands. Born near Iglau, Bohemia (now Jihlava, Czech Republic) Seyss-Inquart served in the Tyrolean *Kaiserjäger* in World War I and was badly wounded.

After the war he worked covertly to assist Hitler while serving as a state councillor in the Austrian government. Only in 1938, when Schuschnigg appointed him Minister of the Interior, did he reveal his true

loyalties. He ordered the police not to oppose the Nazis before the *Anschluss*. After the union he was made *Reichsstatthalter* of Ostmark – the new name for Austria. In 1939 he was deputy to Hans Frank in the *Generalgouvernement* in Poland.

Seyss-Inquart's notoriety is based on his five year rule as *Reichskommissar* in the Netherlands, from 1940 to 1945. At the Nuremberg Tribunal he was found guilty of the deportation and shooting of

hostages. Sentenced to death, he was hanged on 16 October 1946. A few days before his execution he learned that his son, reported missing on the Eastern Front had been found alive.

Right: Initially inclined to treat the Dutch leniently, Seyss-Inquart quickly discovered that apart from Mussert's small Nazi party, the Dutch people had little time for their German conquerors. He became increasingly authoritarian, enforcing anti-Jewish laws and cracking down on any resistance.



A Z OF THE THIRD REICH

Skorzeny, Otto (1908 - 1975)

Born in Vienna on 12 June 1908, Otto Skorzeny was a striking figure nearly two metres tall. Trained as an engineer, he joined the Austrian NSDAP in 1930, becoming a protégé of Kaltenbrunner. In the years before the *Anschluss* he managed a contract building company.

Selected for officer training in 1940, he saw combat in the Balkans and Russia before being invalided home in 1942. Although classed as 'fit for home service only,' he established an SS Special Forces unit.

On 12 September 1943 he led the glider born raid which rescued Mussolini from the hotel

Gran Sasso d'Italia in the Abruzzi Apennines. He assisted in putting down the attempt to seize Berlin following the July Plot of 1944. In October 1944 he led a raid to kidnap the son of the Hungarian Regent Admiral Miklós Horthy, pressuring the Hungarians to stay in the war up to 1945. In December 1944 he commanded a force of English speaking German soldiers who penetrated American lines in US Army uniforms as part of the Ardennes Offensive. Many of these men were caught and subsequently shot.

After the war Skorzeny was tried and acquitted of war crimes.

Based in Spain and Ireland he set up a successful engineering company, also building a network to help former SS members escape from Germany. He died in Madrid on 5 July 1975.

Right: One of the most colourful figures produced by the German armed forces during World War II, Otto Skorzeny's speciality was daring commando operations. He survived the war and prospered, becoming active in organisations to help former SS men.

See also Hitler's War Machine

Issue 19: Special Operations



Sobibór

Extermination camp set up in April 1942 in a wooded area near the frontier of the Ukraine. Along with Chelmno, Belzec and Treblinka it was administered as part of *Aktion Reinhard* by SS-Brigadeführer Odilo Globocnik. Commandants at Sobibór were Richard Thomalla, Franz Stangl, and Franz Reichleitner.

Though there was some minor war industry the camp was principally a killing centre for Jews. Victims were gassed in three chambers each with a capacity of 150 to 200 people.

Carbon monoxide generated by tank and truck engines was piped into the chambers. The bodies were then burned in open pits.

Most of the Jews murdered at Sobibór came from the ghettos of eastern Poland, but victims included Roma and deportees from the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Austria.

On 14 October 1943 Jewish prisoners attempted a mass break out which was violently put down by the German and Ukrainian guards. About 300 inmates managed to escape. After the riot

Sobibór was closed and its buildings dismantled. Even before gassing ceased in the autumn of 1943, the SS began to exhume and destroy remains in an attempt to disguise the evidence of mass murder. It is estimated that between 150,000 and 250,000 people were killed at Sobibor.

Right: The three main Aktion Reinhard camps were set up to murder the Jews of German-occupied Poland. Most of Sobibor's victims came from the ghettos around Lublin.



Sonderfahndungsliste - GB

The 'Special Search List-Great Britain' was the list of prominent Britons and refugees who were to be arrested had Britain been conquered in 1940. The list, also known as the 'Black Book', was discovered among Himmler's

papers after the war. It had been prepared by Walter Schellenberg of the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* who had put 2,300 names on the list. Among those who were to be arrested were the scholars Harold Laski, Bertrand Russell and

Beatrice Webb; the writers H.G. Wells, Virginia Woolf, Aldous Huxley and Norman Angell; the journalists Rebecca West and Douglas Reed; and the playwright Noël Coward. The refugees included Chaim Weizmann,

Ignace Paderewski, Eduard Benes and Jan Masaryk. Among the refugees from Nazi Germany were Ernst 'Putzi' Hanfstaengl and Hermann Rauschning. Most of those arrested were to have been handed over to the Gestapo.

Sorge, Richard (1895 - 1944)

Richard Sorge was born in Baku, the son of a German mining engineer working for the Imperial Russian Oil Company and a Russian mother. Intriguingly he was also the grandson of a secretary to Karl Marx. During World War I he served on the Western Front and was badly wounded. Between 1917-18 he studied at the Universities of Berlin, Kiel and Hamburg, becoming a Communist. In 1924 he was sent by the Party to Moscow, where for three years he worked as an active agent for the Comintern.

In 1930 he began operating as a Soviet agent in the far east. Working for a German news

service he went to Shanghai, moving on to Tokyo as the correspondent for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*.

Tall, untidy and a heavy drinker he became something of a character in the German community in Japan, particularly when he chose to live in a flat in one of the slum districts of Tokyo. He joined the Nazi Party and this enhanced his cover as an agent of Moscow.

Four months before Hitler launched Operation Barbarossa Sorge warned the Russians. His most important information for Stalin was that the Japanese did not intend to capitalise on the Soviet Union's misfortunes in

1941 and invade from Manchuria. This allowed the *Stavka* (Soviet High Command) to move their high quality Siberian troops to counter attack the Germans at Moscow in the winter of 1941-42. Sorge and his Japanese assistant had however been arrested in October 1941. It was reported that he was hanged in Tokyo on 7 November 1944.

Right: Richard Sorge was one of the most successful spies in history, feeding high-level German and Japanese intelligence to Moscow for eight years.

See also Hitler's Battles

Issue 34: The Intelligence War



COMING IN THE NEXT VOLUMES OF **HITLER'S** Third Reich

SECRET HITLER FILES

Hitler's World View
Hitler and Stalin



THE HOLOCAUST

Sobibor/Treblinka
Judenrat



HITLER'S HENCHMEN

Erhard Milch
Oswald Pohl

HITLER'S WAR MACHINE

Light Flak
Infantry support
Junkers Ju 88



INSIDE THE REICH

Corruption
Home Front
Berlin Olympics

NAZI HORRORS

Gross Rosen
Malmedy Massacres
Mauthausen



NAZI SYMBOLS

The Swastika
Sicherheitsdienst



A-TO-Z OF THE THIRD REICH

IN THIS VOLUME OF **HITLER'S** Third Reich

SECRET HITLER FILES

In 1919 Hitler was an Army spy inside the German Workers Party. There, he found his genius for oratory and the tool which would take him to absolute power.

INSIDE THE THIRD REICH

The new masters of Europe seized the heritage of the occupied territories in the greatest art theft in recorded history.



HOLOCAUST

Existence in Germany's concentration camps was a constant battle for survival – a struggle in which winning meant being alive at the end of the day.

WAR MACHINE

In 1941 the Wehrmacht became the first army to reintroduce rocket artillery onto the battlefield – to devastating effect.



HENCHMEN

Albert Kesselring was a charismatic, charming and gifted communicator – but he was also a great field commander. His two seasons in the Italian theatre marked him out as a genius in the art of defensive warfare.

HITLER'S BATTLES

Autumn 1943: German rearguards fight desperately to delay the Allies in southern Italy while the Wehrmacht builds the near impregnable Gustav line – barring the way to Rome.

